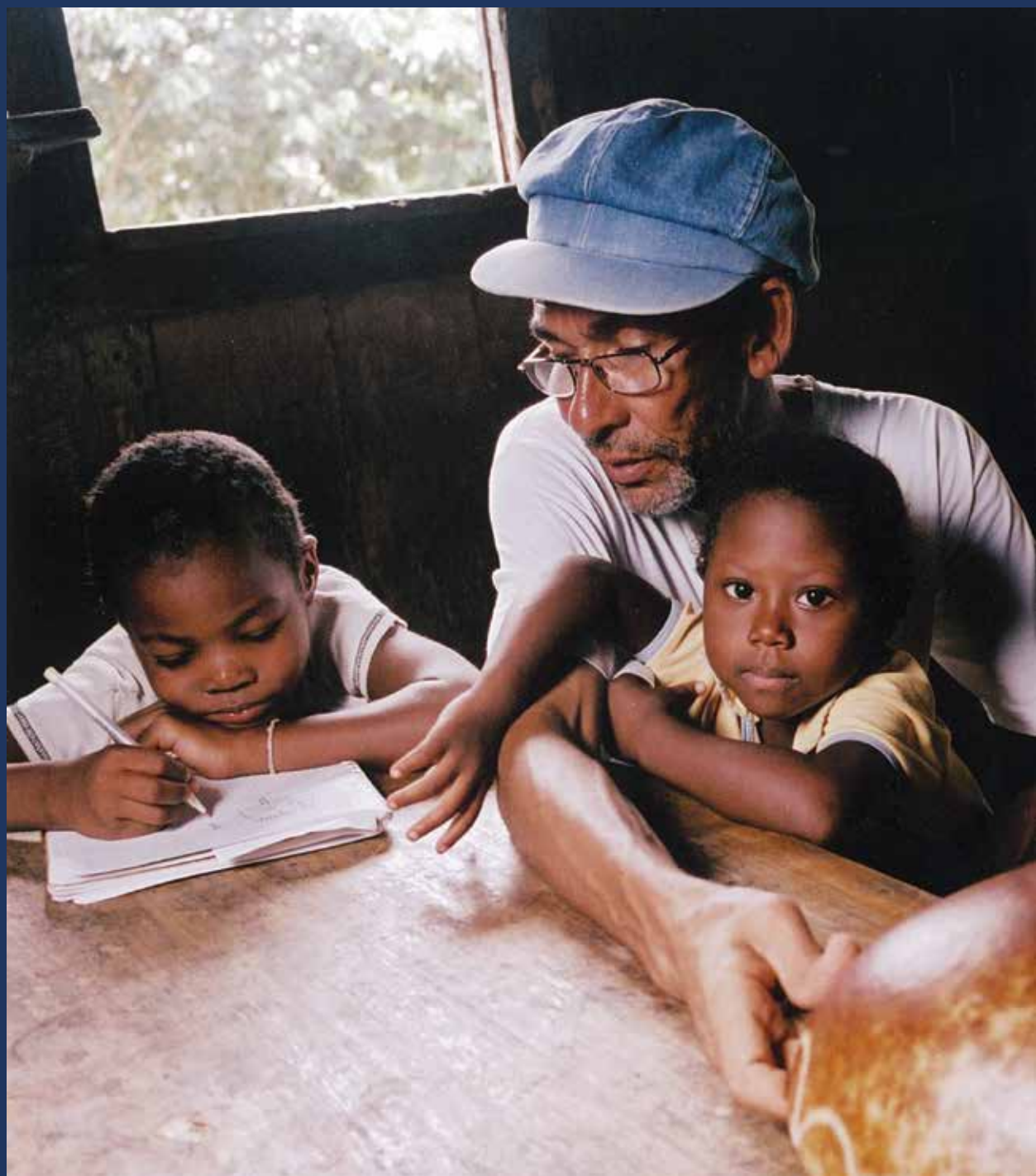


Grassroots Development

Journal of the Inter-American Foundation

Focus: Perspectives Updated



VOLUME 35

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The Inter-American Foundation (IAF), an independent foreign assistance agency of the United States government, was created in 1969 to promote self-help development by awarding grants directly to organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its operating budget consists of congressional appropriations as well as resources derived through the Social Progress Trust Fund, channeled through inter-agency agreements and contributed by external donors.

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The purpose of this journal is to share grassroots experiences in development with a variety of readers. The editor encourages submissions on relevant topics including, but not limited to, the following:

- how the poor in Latin America and the Caribbean organize to improve their lives;
- issues and trends in the development community;
- how institutions cooperate to further the development of the region.

Please direct query letters to Paula Durbin at the above address or e-mail pdurbin@iaf.gov.

Cover: Afro-Ecuadorian children with Juan García, an authority on Ecuador's African heritage. Opposite page: Argentine indigenous leader Rosario Quispe with Bolivian women. Both photos are by Patrick Breslin. This issue contains the final article in his series on grassroots leadership.

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Perspectives Updated

Learning and change is a recurring theme of this issue of *Grassroots Development* that traces its lineage to *They Know How*, the seminal book published in 1977 reflecting lessons from the IAF's first five years of operations. My favorite chapter in that development classic stresses the importance of failure to the learning process. Drawing on the IAF's earliest experiences, it identifies several vividly named "syndromes" that can undermine success. For example, the "Lawrence of Arabia" syndrome warns of initiatives that are dependent on a single charismatic individual. The IAF has taken precautions over the decades to minimize this risk but there is no denying the catalytic role of strong, capable visionaries at the helm of some of our most productive grantee organizations.

So Pat Breslin's article in this issue is a welcome update to the caveat in *They Know How*. Breslin takes a closer look at grassroots leadership and identifies characteristics shared by the six individuals whom he has profiled in these pages over the last few years. His inventory is, admittedly, not exhaustive. Missing from the analysis, for example, is any mention of the willingness of these men and women to reach into their own pockets and to spend precious hours away from their families.

This kind of personal sacrifice comes across, however, in the article by Eduardo Rodríguez-Frías on Fundación Saraki whose Paraguayan leaders not only subsidized the effort at the outset but have turned disability rights into a family pursuit. The IAF's engagement with disability activism dates from its earliest years and is consistent with its mandate calling for broader participation in the development process. All manner of IAF-funded grassroots groups have worked on rehabilitation, training, enterprise development and public education. With the World Health Organization estimating that some 15 percent

of the global population lives with some form of disability, ignoring this segment of society and failing to tap its skills represents a tragic waste of resources. Rodríguez-Frías emphasizes two lessons that have served disability rights activists well—that numbers count and legislation matters—and should help them as they go about showing society that full inclusion means employment.

And what about leadership and financial accountability? As a grantmaker, the IAF relies on regular audits to confirm its grantees' compliance with the terms of their funding and to identify problems, especially where management systems and controls are relatively undeveloped. Rosario Quispe, profiled by Breslin, makes an appearance in the article by Michael Campbell, who has run the IAF's audit program since 2006, and provides an example of the audit's potential for teachable moments. As with other aspects of grassroots development, however, learning runs in both directions. Auditors are challenged by conditions and questions that their university training never covered, and grantee staff learn and develop skills as a result of their interactions with auditors.

Articles by Jocelyn Nieva and Tani Adams illuminate the evolving challenges to grassroots leadership and the IAF's mission. Organized voluntary initiatives burgeoned despite the obstacles imposed by authoritarian rule when the IAF started making grants in the early 1970s. Those regimes have been replaced by democratically-elected government but is the environment any more encouraging to voluntary organizations? Unfortunately, Nieva documents a new insidious threat that takes the form of hostile or ambiguous laws. This is an alarming trend since healthy democracies depend on a robust civil society free to assemble, organize and function in the pursuit of common interests. While civil war is now

rare, extraordinarily high rates of homicide and other violent crime in many countries of the region suggest that a new and debilitating form of conflict may have taken its place. Anthropologist Tani Adams exposes the systemic nature of violence in multiple forms manifest in communities where grassroots organizations work, outlines a new approach to looking at the problem and reports how the IAF and its grassroots partners in five countries are applying her framework.

Global economic forces have always shaped conditions at the community level. Two IAF Fellows, who conducted original research related to grassroots development toward their doctoral degree, contributed articles that explore the local impact of distant markets. Jelena Radovic Fanta reports on how women contracted as temporary labor in the Chilean agricultural sector manage the stresses of their seasonal employment. Rebecca Nelson describes the tensions and tradeoffs associated with volunteer tourism from the perspective of weavers in an association of Guatemalan cooperatives. These articles offer excellent examples of the insight resulting from academic inquiry into the context of development, which is why the IAF supports dissertation research as an important backdrop for our work.

Given that grassroots development yields so many lessons, it seems inevitable that it would be classroom fare. The many IAF alumni whom academia has welcomed include Kevin Healy and Bob Maguire. Healy, who retired in April after 36 years on the job, reflects on his long IAF career that offered multiple opportunities to pull the threads of his experience into publications and courses at two universities. Bob Maguire, now director of the Latin American and Hemispheric Studies program at George Washington University, has been teaching Poverty Alleviation and Bottom-Up Development



since 2011. His class draws on an array of IAF materials, including some taken from this journal, and asks students to think differently about development.

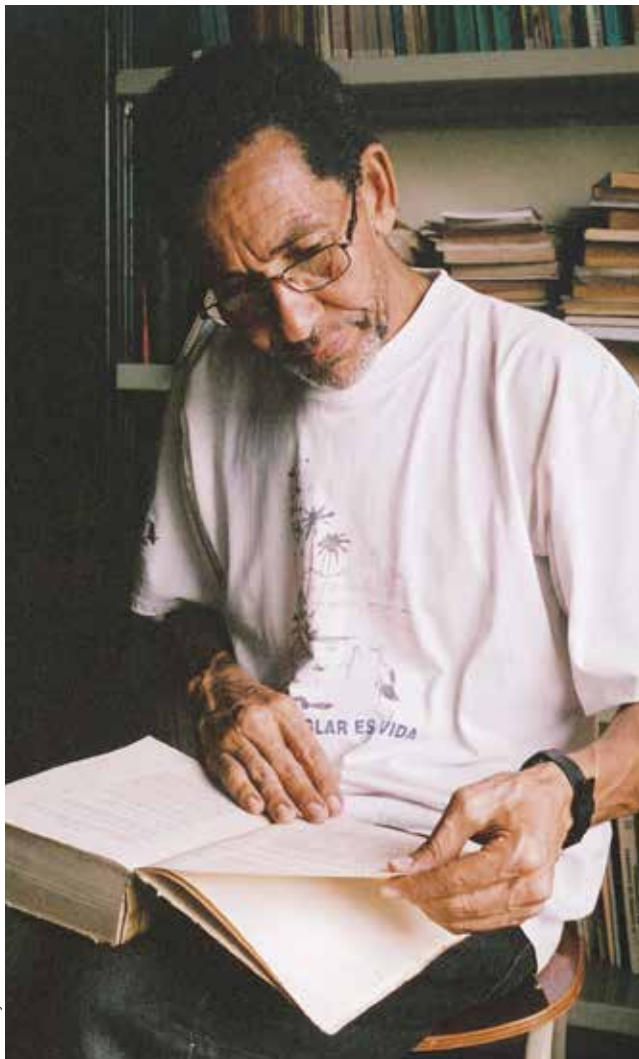
On Maguire's syllabus as required reading is the timeless satirical poem, "The Development Set," written by Ross Coggins just before coming to the IAF in the late 1970s, and we could not resist reprinting it in this issue of *Grassroots Development*. The poem soon went viral even in those days before everyone had a computer, and there has yet to appear a more clever or successful challenge to the notion that it is possible for a self-styled development authority to parachute into a community and fix the problems of the poor. Think of "The Development Set" as a companion piece to its contemporary *They Know How*, which tells us exactly who the real experts are.

Robert N. Kaplan
President and CEO
Inter-American Foundation

Leadership at the Grassroots:

Lawrence Doesn't Live Here Anymore

By Patrick Breslin



Photos by Patrick Breslin

Juan García

Follow the Leader is a children's game that we never stop playing. Leaders populate our history, literature, painting, sculpture and performing arts. David and Solomon in the Bible, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, an endless stream of business books—*My Years with General Motors*, *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun*—offer insights into what makes a leader. Museum walls sag with their portraits, plazas and squares are adorned with their equestrian bronzes. We've woven legends and fictions about their deeds, good and evil, dating back to ancient campfires and running through Shakespeare's Globe Theatre to the latest season of *Game of Thrones*. Yet the nature of leadership remains a mystery cloaked by the uniqueness of the human personality.

Still, we all make judgments about leaders: who captains the football team, who gets the corner office, who sits on the city council, whose stock do we buy, whom do we elect president? The Inter-American Foundation judges leaders as it reviews the 600-plus submissions that it receives each year in response to its call for proposals. It funds roughly one in ten of the ideas submitted and evaluating the leadership of the organizations seeking support is one of the criteria that winnows the list. Leaders who clearly articulate an organization's goals, motivate its members and channel their energy would seem to strengthen a proposal's prospects. But since its earliest days, the IAF has been ambivalent about leaders. *They Know How*, a book summing up the insights of the first five years of IAF funding, worried about the "Lawrence of Arabia syndrome" in which an organization could be too dependent on a dynamic leader, too prone to follow decisions made in isolation, too likely to collapse if that person left the scene.

In recent issues, *Grassroots Development* profiled in-depth six grassroots leaders, out of the thousands who have emerged to prove themselves in the struggle against Latin America's widespread poverty. The six were featured because of notable accomplishments and decades of grassroots experience. (Of them, only Elías Sánchez never received direct IAF funding. He never asked for it, but he encouraged IAF staff to look at one of the regional model farms his work inspired, and it was subsequently funded.) A combination of circumstance and character brought each of them to the fore at a time when Latin American society was changing dramatically, from the bottom up. If Plutarch was right in drawing lessons from lives and deeds, surely these six illuminate traits of effective leadership at the grassroots.

Origins

So where do leaders come from? In politics and government, it can help to be born into the right family. That's the principle of monarchy, and it sometimes works in elections as well—ask the Bushes, or the Kennedys. Farther down the social strata, things get more haphazard. At the grassroots there's really no telling.

Rosario Quispé was the wife of an unemployed miner and the mother of seven children in the remote reaches of Jujuy, Argentina.

Javier de Nicolás grew up hungry amid the ruins of post-war Italy.

Afro-Ecuadorian Juan García left the wandering life to head for Esmeraldas and care for his dying grandfather, who knew a lot of stories.

Chet Thomas came off a Pennsylvania turkey farm to join the Peace Corps.

As a girl, Nohra Padilla helped her parents scavenge a living from trash heaps in Bogotá.

Elías Sánchez started farming on a hillside to supplement his salary as a Honduran bureaucrat.

Times of upheaval can scramble the leadership pool. New opportunities appear, and new problems, sometimes demanding new types of leaders. All six leaders under consideration here came of age after World War II, in a world radically different from the one their grandparents had inhabited. Their parents had been the hinge generation, living through the world wars, tidal population shifts from farms to cities, distances diminishing under airplane wings and automobile wheels, radio and television riding electrical networks into isolated communities and overwriting the oral traditions that once sustained them. The economies of their grandparents, usually based on self-sufficient agriculture, supporting large families, had shattered as capitalist investment spurred growth and concentration in mining, manufacturing and agribusiness. The family farm faded, people who had worked the land became wage earners, often far from home. Out of the social and economic problems these changes generated came the challenges these six leaders would meet.

Rosario's grandfather raised sheep, cattle and alfalfa on hundreds of acres of Puna—the high desert where Argentina, Bolivia and Chile meet. All three products had come to the highlands with the Spanish conquistadores, but otherwise her grandfather lived much as his Coya ancestors had for millennia, patiently exploiting the Puna's resources and trade routes. Her father's generation left the Puna for jobs in industrial-scale mining and agribusiness in the lowlands.

Javier de Nicolás's father was wounded several times in the maw of the First World War, and the streets of his childhood were bombed into ruins during the Second.



Elías Sánchez

Juan García's father was a refugee from the Spanish Civil War, waning from nostalgia on a strange coast half a world from home, but his maternal grandfather descended from slaves who had found freedom and carved out a living in the rain forests of Esmeraldas. Fishing and farming supported an extended family and Garcia's grandfather was renowned for his vast store of oral folklore.

The self-sufficient family farm in Gobbler Hollow, Pennsylvania, where Chet Thomas grew up, raised turkeys as a cash crop. It went under when poultry production shifted to rural factories.

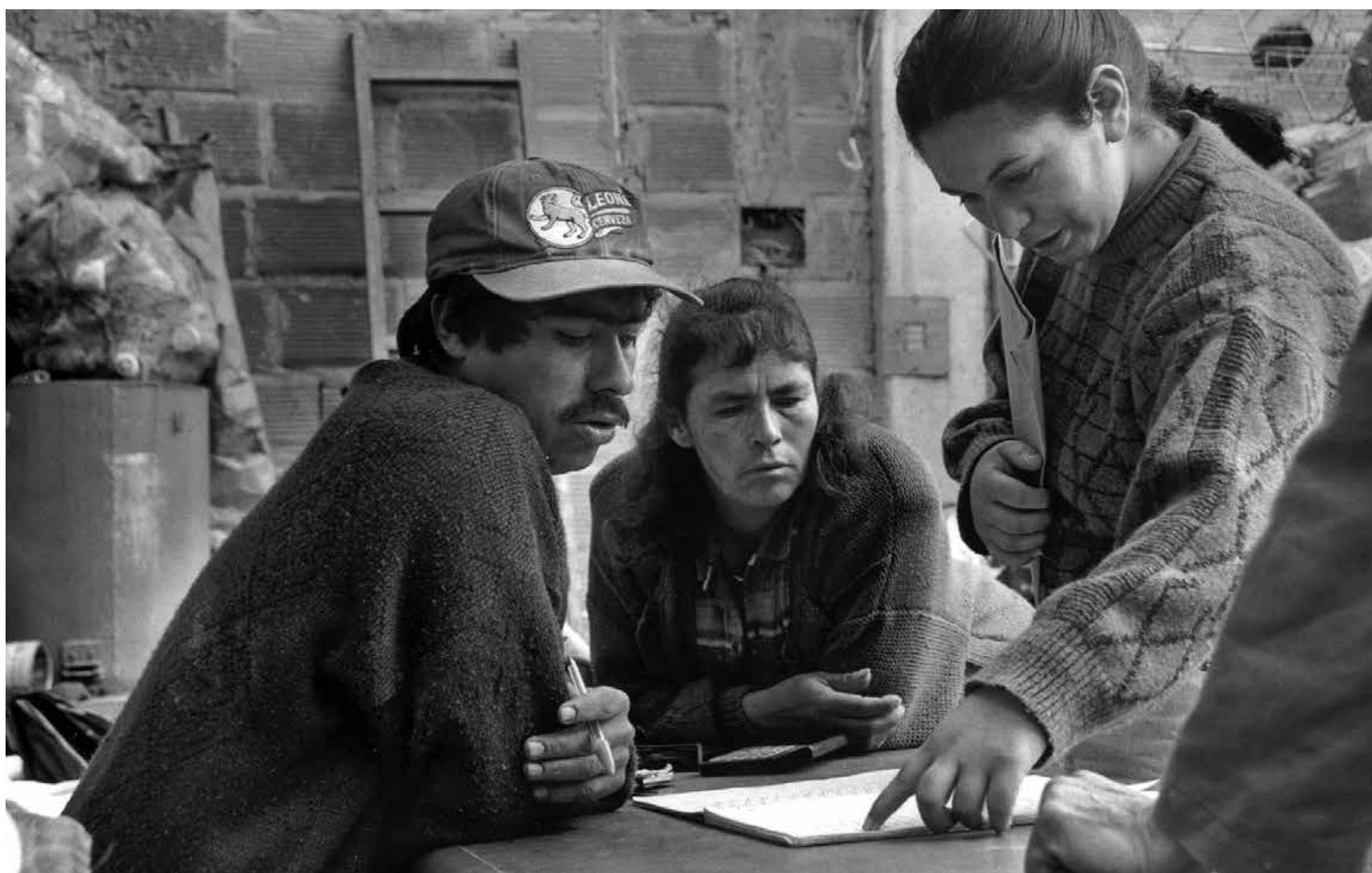
Nohra Padilla's parents were swept from their home by political violence in Colombia's countryside and into the desperately poor squatter settlements that ringed its cities.

Elías Sánchez saw industrial-scale agriculture, generally foreign-financed and controlled, dispossess farmers and turn swaths of southern Honduras into semi-desert.

Passion for change

Most students of leadership distinguish between leaders and managers. Managers keep the wheels turning, leaders get them going in the first place, or change course. Leaders aim for transformation and tap the energy of followers to push it through. Leaders need passion, and they need to involve others in their passion. At the grassroots, leaders emerge because they see conditions that threaten themselves, their communities and what they value—justice, equality, the natural world, the worth of each human being, the innocence of children. Where many regard such threats as the reality of life, leaders stand up to them.

With Argentina's financial crisis of the 1980s, jobs in the mines and lowlands disappeared and real poverty came to the Puna, along with an alarming growth in



Nohra Padilla, right.

health problems, particularly among women, from the toxic tailings left behind by the mines. “We had to do something different,” Rosario said. “If we continued the way we were, we would all die.”

A youth club organized by local priests took Javier de Nicoló off the streets of southern Italy and gave his life direction. Two decades later, on a different continent, he believed the gaminés—the street kids—of Colombia deserved the same chance.

A simple question fueled Juan García’s passion for change: Why were there no monuments to African descendants in Ecuador?

After his tour with the Peace Corps, Chet Thomas studied and then worked various jobs in the United States. Sent to Honduras with a relief program undertaken by the World Council of Churches after a major hurricane, he decided to stay. Traveling in western Honduras, he came upon the high, isolated valley of Belén Gualcho where he saw the indigenous Lenca in poverty and forced to migrate for work. “I wanted to do something significant with my life,” he said, “and I thought I’d like to see the little guy win every once in a while.”

As a teenager, Nohra Padilla helped organize community projects in her neighborhood. When the city of Bogotá announced plans to close down a trash dump on which struggling Colombians depended for their livelihood, she moved to mass protests that eventually helped them win official recognition as recyclers.

Elías Sánchez saw the majority of poor farmers in Honduras ignored by the agricultural “Green Revolution” and structural adjustment programs. He decided to teach them how to survive on the only landscapes left them.

A vision

Wanting change is not enough. Leaders need a vision of where they want change to go, a picture of a different reality that might be possible to achieve. They need the mindset limned in the quotation that the late Ted Kennedy famously used to eulogize his brother, Robert, after his assassination in 1968: “Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not.”

Nohra Padilla thought sorting through trash could be transformed from a desperate survival strategy to a profitable business if the people involved could, as recyclers, control more of the reprocessing chain and if they had a seat at the table where decisions affecting them were made.

As a young seminarian, Javier de Nicoló volunteered to go to Colombia, where he worked with youths in prison. One day he realized he should be working on the streets with kids before they went to jail.

Elías Sánchez wanted a network of “human farms” throughout Honduras, overseen by colleagues who had internalized his own pedagogic approach. “You start with the person, not the land. The point of training was to teach farmers to think, to be creative, to have a positive attitude, to stimulate their imaginations to find resources for development.”

In some cases, the vision drew from the past, from a time before the changes that roiled the 20th century. Unprompted, three of the six leaders interviewed described memories of a childhood in a protective and self-sufficient household still headed by a grandfather. In their minds and memories, that was the foundation, providing the necessities of life, and on it, you could build towards prosperity.

Rosario’s grandfather “had 300 cows, 800 sheep and fields of alfalfa and maize. He never had a salary, but who says we were poor?” She rejected development strategies imposed by experts and dreamed of indigenous control of a process, based on her people’s 8,000-year history on the Puna, that would revive the society she knew as a child, and build on it.

As Juan García captured on tape the rich folklore of Afro-Ecuadorians, starting with his grandfather’s stories, he grew to understand the complexities of culture his ancestors had created in the coastal lowlands. He thought that the lessons drawn from those cultural patterns could be the basis for a locally-based development strategy.

Chet Thomas saw the working farm of his boyhood as a path to a better life for thousands of poor farmers. “We like to see every farmer growing all the food he needs for himself, plus a cash crop for the market,” he explained.

From vision to strategy

Passion is the fuel and vision the road map, but what turns the motor over is a realistic strategy. For grassroots leaders, the starting point is usually faith in the power of people united by a common goal. Typically, the first concrete steps are finding collaborators, starting an organization, raising funds, staffing up, setting policies and goals. Four of the six leaders created new organizations to realize their visions. Nohra Padilla was a key field worker for Colombian recyclers



Chet Thomas, right.

and rose quickly to the top executive post in both the Bogotá and the nation-wide association. Elías Sánchez simply created a model farm on a piece of land he called Loma Linda. All the efforts took tremendous energy and stamina and no one worked just nine-to-five.

Warmi Sayajsunqo (WARMI), which means Persevering Woman, began in 1995 when Rosario Quispe invited 10 other women to meet in her home. "We decided to work together, to come up with our own solution, not wait for someone to save us," Quispe recalled. Membership grew quickly from the original 10 to some 3,600 in more than 80 Coya communities as Rosario

crisscrossed the Puna, often clocking 400 kilometers a day in a pick-up truck.

Juan García and a few like-minded associates founded the Centro Cultural Afro-Ecuatoriano in Quito in the 1970s as a place to explore their identity and reflect on their people's experience. Their systematic recording of folklore in Esmeraldas and the Chota Valley started building the monuments to his people that Juan wanted, out of their own stories, songs and poetry. At the same time, Juan and his colleagues were learning about the threats, particularly to land rights, that loomed over Esmeraldas with the appearance of industrial-scale plantations of African palm trees. The



Padre Javier de Nicoló, right.

experiences spun off political and social efforts that would eventually enshrine Afro-Ecuadorian rights in the Constitution for the first time.

In 1983, Chet Thomas founded Proyecto Aldea Global, or Project Global Village, (PAG) to turn the vision of a self-sufficient farm with a cash crop into reality one farmer at a time. PAG's methodology involved sitting with each farmer to map his land on a piece of stiff paper, deciding where each crop would go, where to conveniently place kitchen herbs, which field to reserve for the cash crop. In the years since, Aldea Global has conceived and conducted some of the most ambitious regional development programs in the hemisphere. By 1992, the Honduran government had asked PAG to work in and protect the buffer zone of the country's largest national park, the source of 80 percent of its electricity.

Padre Javier started with a vacant building belonging to his Salesian order, and worked his contacts in business and government to get resources and more spaces. Eventually, he founded Fundación Servicio de Orientación Juvenil (FSJ). Soon after, the Bogotá district government asked him to direct its own agency for street kids. Javier ran both organizations for decades, expanding a simple daytime recreation center offering sports and a shower in a rough area of downtown Bogotá into a network of full-time boarding schools offering primary and secondary education and vocational training serving up to 10,000 boys and girls across Colombia.

Under Nohra Padilla's leadership, the Association of Recyclers established itself as an integral part of Bogotá's trash collection system, operating as professionals with uniforms, identity cards, set routes and schedules. They

collect for recycling at least 15 percent of the trash generated each day in the city, about 100 tons of material.

On his hillside farm a few miles from Tegucigalpa, *Elías Sánchez* employed bizarre elements, dented pots from trash heaps for planters, discarded auto and truck tires to shore up contour terraces carved into the hillside. *Ismael Vargas*, one of his disciples, delighted in weeding his seed beds with the few protruding teeth in the top half of a bleached cattle skull. The point was to stimulate farmers' imagination so they would see that many of the resources and tools they needed were lying around for the taking. Before his death in 2000, *Sánchez* had helped more than 30,000 farmers switch from slash-and-burn agriculture to hillside terraces that stopped erosion and he had seen 30 model farms that he had inspired appear around Honduras.

Communicators

Leadership is a relationship—if there are no followers, there are no leaders—so it is largely about communication. Leaders are teachers who can draw on the energy of their followers and channel it towards a purpose. Starting from the grassroots is not bad preparation for a grassroots leader. Unlike hierarchical organizations—the military, corporate and government bureaucracies—membership in grassroots and nongovernmental groups is voluntary. Instead of commanding, their leaders must inspire and motivate. Knowing in their bones the daily lives of poor people gives those at the helm the credibility that helps communicate their vision, their hope for the future.

Jorge Amador, who was inspired by *Elías Sánchez* and worked beside him for years, has a simple message for the southern Honduran farmers who visit his bountiful model farm not far from where he grew up. "Poverty doesn't exist," he insists. "What exists is ignorance. If people are using their intelligence, they can do it. If I can make it here, so can you."

Visiting an isolated community for the first time, *Rosario Quispe* bought all the wool its spinners offered. Then she startled the women with a blunt assessment of its quality. "I paid for it, not because I'm a fool, but because I want you to continue working. But next time, wool like this will not be accepted." The women listened in stunned silence as she extracted two skeins. "Ladies, this is very poorly made. This one, however, is top quality.

So, if you want to sell, this is the quality you have to produce." Message communicated, she immediately diffused the tension: "It's like husbands," she said with a smile. "If they deceive you at the beginning and you let them get away with it, you'll never have a good life together." Answering smiles broke out around the room.

Juan García opens a meeting on the future of Esmeraldas with some 20 Afro-Ecuadorian activists by reading brief descriptions of life along the rivers recorded decades ago. "We put the voice of the ancestors on the table for political discussion. I use the past to illustrate that there is a fountain of thought, of philosophy, or experience, to which we can return. There were times when we were self-sufficient. Not that we had a lot, but that we didn't need anything more. I insist that the Afro community use what we learn of the past as the starting point for integration today."

Several years ago, *Padre Javier* turned his attention to older kids, often considered lost causes by age 17 or so. In Colombia, they're called *desechables*, or throwaways. "But life is a carousel," *Javier* insists, "that comes around again and again to offer opportunities. At that age, the boys realize life is rushing away from them, and they have no education, no job, no family. 'You realize the train is leaving you behind,' I tell them and they say that that panics them. It goads them into the training programs we've tailored for them."

Nohra Padilla's communication skills are generally aimed at the government agencies and officials whose policies affect her members. She meets regularly with mayors, ministers, donors and journalists. Around the conference table, when the lawyers and economists and civil engineers introduce themselves by profession, *Padilla* simply says, "Recycler" and makes her case so compellingly that one government representative called her "the most tenacious woman in the world."

A key component of *Chet Thomas's* work is communicating with donors and potential donors outside of Honduras. He built and nurtures an extensive support network of religious organizations and groups in the United States that provides funds and very often, used equipment that can solve a problem in Honduras. *PAG* was able to convert a typical donation, a hay binder off a Midwest farm, into a drive unit for a paddle-wheel ferryboat that plies the reservoir in the national park.

Long-term commitment

Rosario Quispe, Juan García and Nohra Padilla are from the grassroots groups of which they are leaders. Two of the remaining three are foreigners, Javier de Nicolás, a priest from Italy, and Chet Thomas from the United States. Elías Sánchez was a university-trained expert but the men he recruited to run regional demonstration farms were from those regions. What all six have in common is a life-long commitment to grassroots work and to the communities and nations where they have already worked for decades. De Nicolás and Thomas have already lived more years in their adopted countries than their native ones.

Rosario Quispe is a sought-after speaker in Argentina and abroad. But after every trip she takes a day to walk on her land among her llamas, to ground herself again in the reality of the Puna. "I'm the same as you," she tells women in the organization. "I never got past the seventh grade. I raise my llamas just like you do."

Now in his eighties, Padre Javier has battled back from illness and enjoyed a round of testimonials to his work, capped by the Orden de Boyacá, Colombia's highest honor, which then-president Álvaro Uribe personally pinned on the priest's jacket. Not that the honors meant de Nicolás was retiring. "I still have a lot to accomplish with the poor children," he said.

Thomas bought land in Honduras, married, raised five children. "I realized if I wanted to do something significant, I'd have to stay a long time," he said.

Lawrence of Arabia

As was mentioned at the beginning of this article, one of the cautions IAF developed in its first five years was tagged the "Lawrence of Arabia Syndrome," after the popular film of the 1960s. In it, T. E. Lawrence was portrayed as organizing the Arab tribes in a desert campaign against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. But when Lawrence left, the story went, everything fell apart. Leaders like Lawrence, it seemed, could inspire and galvanize people, yet fail to let them develop their own strengths and capabilities. The lesson, it seemed to the IAF, was to avoid projects built around a strong figure that would be "subject to autocratic decision-making and paternalism" and might leave the participants abandoned and worse off than at the start. Perhaps the labeling of a "syndrome" was appropriate for a time when non-

governmental organizations in Latin America were cropping up like mushrooms after rain. Many turned out to be personal vehicles trolling for increasingly available foreign funding. Few survived very long. But ever since *They Know How*, IAF analysts have probed for signs of widespread and genuine participation within organizations to counter skeptical internal reviews about projects with strong leaders. Even though there is no necessary correlation between strong leaders and autocratic, paternalistic behavior, the insistence on broad participation undoubtedly led to better choices of projects for funding. And obviously, with 40 additional years of experience, IAF has learned the value of strong leaders.

Today, Latin America is rich in grassroots organizations with decades of experience and accomplishments. Many of their leaders seem indispensable. It's possible the Afro-Ecuadorian oral tradition would have disappeared without a trace if Juan García had not returned to Esmeraldas. Or that an indigenous organization like WARMI would not have spread over the Puna without Rosario Quispe. But dynamic and accomplished leaders do not mean the organizations behind them are weak. And the leaders profiled here, particularly the older ones, have been thinking about the question of succession for a long time.

Padre Javier has staffed his organization almost entirely with former gamines who developed leadership skills in its programs.

Chet Thomas has mentored future leaders of PAG and found university scholarships to help groom them.

Elías Sánchez searched out and inspired men with the potential to carry his ideas throughout Honduras.

Juan García observed, after four years of political organizing in Esmeraldas, that "Afro-Ecuadorians are in the Constitution now. There are centers where future leaders are being trained, there are palenques, Afro-Ecuadorian organizations, with legal status. Now," he concluded, "I'm going to write."

This series on grassroots leaders is rooted in conversations with the men and women profiled that started as long as three decades ago. One of the great advantages of IAF's approach to funding is the frequent opportunity its staff members have to spend time with remarkable Latin Americans. Rosario Quispe once needed a ride to the Coya community



Rosario Quispe

that wanted to sell wool to WARMI. It was five hours away in Bolivia and the only vehicle available was my rental car, so I drove her and had a unique chance to see her in action. I've spent hours walking the streets of Quito and days floating on the wide rivers of Esmeraldas with Juan García, exploring themes of culture and identity. I've covered countless kilometers in central and western Honduras with Chet Thomas, learning about Aldea Global's long-term and multi-faceted support for the communities that it has helped to emerge from poverty and isolation. I've raced across Bogotá with Padre Javier to the variety of recreational and educational facilities he's created and rolled through the streets at dawn with coffee

and breakfast buns for sleepy *gamines*. I was a frequent visitor to Loma Linda, and last talked to Elías Sánchez just a few days before he died. I met Nohra Padilla in Las Marías, a community literally built on trash in the southern rim of Bogotá, where migrants had filled a shallow lagoon with dirt and garbage, tamped it down, then erected ramshackle houses on the new land. Nohra was helping them join Bogotá's association of recyclers. Last year, I saw her at the Ronald Reagan Center in Washington where she was the Latin American recipient of the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize.

The six leaders profiled in this series for *Grassroots Development* took on some of the biggest problems

The Lawrence of Arabia Syndrome

Five years after the Inter-American Foundation opened its doors, its staff took a hard look at the lessons of success as well failure and compiled their reflections in They Know How. The book points to the most significant element in success as the initiative that emerges when the people closest to the problem invest their energy in working together toward a solution. Setbacks are often due to the absence of authentic community support. They Know How looks at a dozen "syndromes" that can undermine grassroots development, all labeled with names from popular culture. Of these, none has been as memorable to readers as the syndrome named for T.E. Lawrence, excerpted here.

The Lawrence of Arabia Syndrome refers to the high failure potential of projects built around or sustained by a strong central figure, which are, therefore, subject to autocratic decisionmaking and paternalism rather than true participation.

- Beware of projects built around one person and justified on the basis of that individual's impressive record. These projects are highly susceptible to the personal whims of the central figure, the time and effort he or she can make available, and his or her shifting personal priorities which may not necessarily reflect community needs.
- Beware of projects in which the leadership does not make itself accountable to the community for the use of funds or responsible for the appropriateness of project objectives.
- Beware of projects administered by progressive intermediary groups accountable to a conservative central organization or constituency. The ability of intermediaries to act and respond is often severely restricted, and project expectations should reflect that potential limitation.
- Beware of projects in which the community's stated social philosophy and purpose are apparently in accord with operational principles but for which the key administrative personnel have not been selected at the time of the grant. One should also take into account the possibility that the leadership of a project may change during its formative stage, transforming the project's character and scope to such a degree that it may even become counterproductive.
- Beware of projects predicated on the expectation that progressive individuals voicing visionary socio-economic perspectives can significantly influence the policy decisions of a conservative organization. These voices can be isolated, removed, ignored, or otherwise silenced. The grant thus serves to reinforce the status quo.

on the international development agenda—poverty, exploitation, the environment, exclusion based on race and ethnicity, and development strategies that ignored many destitute and disadvantaged citizens. Their organizations’ accomplishments—results that top-down development agencies spending tens of millions of dollars would be proud to claim, and so seldom can—make the case for a responsive, grassroots approach to foreign assistance. While not geographically a representative sample of grassroots leaders in Latin America (four of the six work in only two countries), they do typify the leadership component of the infrastructure for bottom-up development that has emerged in the region. That infrastructure

is made up of thousands of grassroots groups and nongovernmental organizations that wrestle with the same challenges that international foreign assistance has tried to address for more than half a century, but they get things done. There is no reason beyond bureaucratic and policy inertia not to channel a much greater proportion of foreign aid through such leaders and their organizations.

Patrick Breslin retired from the IAF after 22 years of service, including as vice-president heading the Office of External Affairs.

The following are examples of this syndrome taken from the Foundation’s funding experience. Grantees who share its commitment to learning as a means of further refining perception and decision-making abilities took part in the critical reflection on this experience.

- IAF funded a housing project largely as a result of its incorrect perception that community cohesiveness and commitment already existed and would be strengthened by shared labor. It also incorrectly perceived that a local priest was an authentic spokesman for the needs and values of the community and was accountable to the project’s participants. In reality, the priest was autocratic and paternalistic and made key project decisions in isolation. Community cohesion did not exist to any significant degree. The shared labor of building houses did not contribute to community cohesiveness. On balance, the project served to strengthen the priest’s already disproportionate influence rather than assist the community in beginning to make its own decisions.
- Another project had a strong central figure with an impressive record of accomplishments. One element in the IAF’s decision was the existence of a coordinating committee to offset potential problems of dominance by, or over reliance on,

the leader. The committee was known to be balanced and willing to speak its mind rather than be intimidated. It subsequently challenged what it perceived to be the leader’s autocratic decision-making and lack of financial accountability. The members resigned in protest and were replaced by other individuals personally selected by the leader, apparently because they could not challenge his decisions. The project, although needed and valuable, developed serious administrative problems, which made its ultimate effectiveness highly questionable.

....

It would be misleading to imply that strong central leadership always should be regarded as a negative sign to be avoided in all cases. Experience indicates that community organizations have benefited from the expertise, influence, energy, and the commitment of individual leaders and intermediaries. However, special attention should be focused on the leader’s ability and willingness to share decision-making rather than allowing the leader to become forever indispensable.



Photos courtesy Fundación Saraki

Disabilities and Inclusion in Paraguay

By Eduardo Rodríguez-Frías

I met Julio Fretes, a whip-smart Paraguayan lawyer, in 2004 when I represented the IAF at the United Nations during the negotiations that produced the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Fretes was among a dozen activists from Latin America whose attendance at those meetings was funded by the IAF. As the largest contingent from civil society in the developing world, the *latinos* brought a needed perspective to advocates from industrialized nations and to the diplomats at the bargaining table, which was reflected in the finalized treaty. Fretes, who had lost his sight as an adult, mentored me while I served as his “*lazarillo*,” his guide, in New York City. The term comes from *El Lazarillo*

de Tormes, a 16th-century Spanish novella about an apprentice named Lázaro in service to a clever blind man. Our duo invited more than a few comparisons. We shared a passion for literature, which Fretes continued to enjoy thanks to audiobooks from the Argentine publisher Tiflolibros (from the Greek *tyflós*, meaning blind, Fretes said), and he taught me a lot about the portrayal of blind characters.

I learned even more about two all-important forces that determine how people with disabilities live: the law, obviously, but also numbers. Fretes told me, for example, that Paraguay’s civil code at that time prohibited a blind citizen from entering into a contract. In practical terms, Fretes, a licensed

attorney and an expert in his field, could not legally arrange to have a working cell-phone. He had one, but the law presumed him incompetent and, therefore, considered his contract with the service-provider invalid. Regarding the numbers, Fretes was convinced that for the disabled, they never added up. "Ask for accessible public transport and you'll be told that the group is too small to justify investment," he explained. "Ask for disability payments for all qualifying citizens and you'll be told there are too many and the government will go bankrupt."

Inadequate services and dilapidated facilities seemed to confirm his observation. Very few Paraguayans with any kind of disability attended school and, regardless of age, their classes usually amounted to little more than daycare. Access to public transport and buildings for this demographic was purely coincidental. Formal employment opportunities were practically unheard of. Residential institutions housed children with adults; individuals with intellectual disabilities lived with psychiatric patients, preventing rehabilitation and endangering the vulnerable. Restraints, cages and solitary confinement were common, along with unsanitary conditions. Guardianships were not easily revoked, even if they resulted in abuse or were unnecessary.

In 2008, the Paraguayan government ratified the U.N. Convention, signaling its acceptance of the obligations under this binding treaty, including the enactment of legislation in compliance with its provisions. While such requirements often go ignored in ratifying countries, to date the Paraguayan government has appeared to act in good faith. Most strikingly, the government has invited civil society to take an essential place at the table. Unfortunately, Fretes did not live to see this; he died tragically in 2009. But his insights endure in a disability movement that has flourished under the leadership of IAF grantee Fundación Saraki (Saraki). Thanks to Saraki, a network of Paraguayan grassroots organizations influences official policy with regard to disabled citizens and gives a voice to a neglected population that had depended on charity undergirded by pity, guilt and prejudice. Saraki did not start out with such grand ambitions. As often happens with grassroots organizations, its success was initially incremental, a reminder of the thirsty crow in Aesop's fable. Unable to reach the water at the bottom

of a pitcher, the parched bird dropped a pebble into it, then another, then more until the water level rose and it could drink.

The first pebbles

María José Cabezudo grew up shielding her older brother with Down syndrome from the unkindness of strangers and from the overprotection of her own well-meaning parents who, she was convinced, underestimated their son. Her commitment to his well-being, and her awareness of his abilities, drove her to train as a teacher and to take a position in one of the few schools in Asunción, public or private, available to children with cognitive disabilities. Even as a beginner in the classroom, she could see the limitations of their curriculum, the best that the educational system had to offer. Troubling too was that her students seldom interacted with peers who were not disabled: the two groups had different arrival and departure times; they were segregated during lunch and recess.

Cabezudo took a modest first step toward enriching the school day by choreographing a *cumbia*. Her students' rousing rendition of the dance at the final assembly of the school year stunned the parents, teachers and other kids in the audience. That enthusiastic applause led to regular after-school classes in creative movement and theater three days a week. Recitals for proud parents escalated into the production of the young artists' own original play, *I'm Different Just Like You*. Staged in a theater and open to the public, it called for them to speak out on life and their disabilities.

When the school closed for lack of funds, the students had no place to go. So Cabezudo decided to open her own school, one that would emphasize the arts to encourage learning, thriving and becoming as independent as possible. She called it "Saraki," Guaraní for playful or rambunctious, a reference to the exuberance of the classrooms. Because Cabezudo did not like to turn a child away, and parents often fell behind on tuition, she found herself struggling. Month after month, she would turn to her husband, Raul Montiel, and income from his ranch would cover the shortfall. By 2003, the couple decided to restructure the school as a foundation that could raise the funds to keep Saraki in opera-

tion and focused on cognitive disabilities, while allowing Cabezudo to take on the greater challenge of helping all disabled Paraguayans. Delegating his responsibilities for the ranch, Montiel became executive director of Fundación Saraki. His appeals attracted contributions.

The numbers game

In 2007, Coordinadora Nacional por la Promoción de los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad (CONAPRODIS), another disability-rights organization, applied for an IAF grant and so did Fundación Saraki. I didn't know Saraki at the time, but CONAPRODIS was headed by Fretes. Both groups seemed to agree on the problems facing Paraguayans with disabilities; each proposed to develop a network representing every type of disability and to assure that government services reached these citizens.

Normally, the IAF keeps its distance from applicants, but in this case, the IAF's representative for Paraguay and I suggested that CONAPRODIS and Saraki join forces. They agreed and their joint proposal, with Saraki as signatory, was funded in the amount of \$250,000 to be disbursed over five years. When Fretes died, CONAPRODIS became inactive, foundering without his charisma and analytical skills. Saraki, however, had solidified a coalition of dozens of grassroots groups representing the blind, the deaf and people with physical, psychological and cognitive disabilities. As a coalition, they stepped up the pace with a plan to resolve the numbers problem identified by Fretes, whom Cabezudo credits with changing the focus of the local discourse from rehabilitation to rights. Not only did the numbers not add up, but, they had never been accurate in the first place. According to the data available at the time, only 1 percent of Paraguayans reported living with a disability. The World Bank estimates the average for countries measuring this demographic at about 15 percent. In developing nations, the estimate is usually higher due to the correlation of poverty with disease, malnutrition, work-related injuries, limited access to medical care and other factors.

Aware that a census was scheduled for 2012, disability activists from throughout the country approached Paraguay's Dirección General de



"Everyone has the right to vote...Join in building a Paraguay that's for everyone."

Estadísticas, Encuestas y Censos (DGEEC), which conducts the survey. At first, the census officials resisted but they conceded after Saraki enlisted the media to expose flaws in the data. Once they were on board, Saraki proposed training census-takers to approach a topic that many used to skip, wary of embarrassing the people interviewed. The activists also wanted to revise the section in the survey on disability and began by negotiating semantics. Many Paraguayans didn't know the meaning of "cognitive disability" but readily understood "mongoloid" and "retarded," terminology offensive to activists and family members. The compromise brokered combined practicality with sensitivity by using such words but explaining that they were pejorative. In addition to better trained census staff and more articulate questions, the collaboration between DGEEC and civil society yielded an educational campaign organized by Saraki to encourage Paraguayans with disabilities to come forward and be counted. The 2012 census reported that 11.4 percent of the population had a disability or more than 700,000 citizens, compared to 55,000 previously estimated.

“Nothing about us without us”

Armed with the new census and the U.N. Convention, the grassroots groups chose legal reform as the next target. To prepare the way, Saraki invested significant resources from its IAF award in workshops directed at improving the effectiveness of 3,400 representatives of the disabled people’s organizations in the network. The cornerstone of the training, full citizenship, implied rejection of the “medical approach” that assumes that the disabled have a health problem to be “fixed” before they can be accepted as equals. The emphasis on rights, enshrined in the U.N. Convention, looks beyond an individual’s physical condition to focus on an inclusive society that reasonably accommodates the disabled so they participate in community life and are valued.

Working with Saraki’s grassroots coalition, the Paraguayan Congress enacted statutes that include such advances as tax incentives for businesses that employ the disabled, hiring quotas for the civil service, accessibility standards for private and public sector and a requirement that public schools educate

children with disabilities. For disability activists, the jewel in their legislative victories is the creation of the National Disability Secretariat (SENADIS), an executive agency that formulates government policy and is overseen by the National Disability Council (CONADIS), comprising representatives elected by members of disabled people’s organizations. Committees organized by SENADIS as working groups to mainstream its agenda across the government include seven cabinet ministers—notably of labor, transportation, education and health—who are charged with assuring that their ministries are responsive to Paraguayans with disabilities. In committee meetings, these senior officials have an opportunity to interact with disabled constituents and they hear how their ministries are performing and how they can improve.

In early 2014, shortly after the enactment of Paraguay’s inclusive education law, Cabezudo and Montiel travelled to Washington, D.C., with Rocio Soledad Florentín Gómez, who heads SENADIS, to learn how the U.S. achieved near-universal education for children with disabilities and to avoid the



The Paraguayan government has committed to purchasing only accessible vehicles as replacements for its current bus fleet.

mistakes made along the way. Currently, Florentín Gómez noted, less than 3 percent of Paraguayan children with disabilities are enrolled in school; the percentage is even lower for those with cognitive disabilities and for girls. The packed agenda organized by the IAF included visits to the U.S. Department of Education, two local public schools and the disability organizations TASH, Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund and Easter Seals as well as meetings at Department of State and USAID, where the Paraguayans explained Saraki's work. During the appointments, Montiel credited USAID's support for the coalition's efforts to educate the Paraguayan Congress on inclusion, which yielded the desired reforms at the top, but emphasized that grassroots efforts, financed with IAF support, ensure that the benefits reach those at the bottom. "Disabled people's organizations must fill the spaces created by the new laws," Montiel insisted. "People with disabilities have a better understanding of the challenges they face than able-bodied peers and are indispensable to identifying the problems to be resolved, proposing solutions and overseeing the government's compliance with its obligations."

Into the mainstream

Saraki never misses an opportunity to insist on inclusion. This tenacity made a vivid impression at a meeting in 2010 in Paysandú, Uruguay, where representatives of IAF grantees from Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil came together to share accomplishments related to agriculture, handicrafts and improving municipal services. Rather than report on its considerable achievements in advancing disability rights while the others listened politely but passively, Saraki's representatives called for each grantee to actively consider how people with disabilities participate in the respective NGO. One, Federación de Entidades Vecinalistas del Paraguay (FEDEM), which trains neighborhood associations to articulate concerns to local officials, approached Saraki weeks later to help encouraging residents with disabilities to join up and making training accessible.

Saraki's successes earned it a second IAF award in 2013 to further develop its disability-rights network currently comprising more than 100 grassroots groups. Recent surveys of their constituencies

revealed their most urgent priorities: affordable health care, reliable transportation, and education and training that lead to employment. Saraki is concentrating on developing marketable skills and identifying job opportunities as essential to independence and to showing how disabled Paraguayans can contribute to a society that includes them. While Saraki and Cabezudo can take well-deserved credit for advancing the rights of Paraguayans with all types of disabilities, their priority is people with cognitive disabilities. This means that in addition to offering opportunities to participate in art, music and theater, Saraki's commitment now includes helping them find employment. "Work dignifies," Montiel explained. "If Paraguayans understand what these young people are capable of at work, opportunities will follow."

This could prove Saraki's biggest challenge. While training and placement might be sufficient to set, say, a visually-impaired individual on the path to a productive life, a worker with cognitive disabilities might require more. With a job comes a paycheck to manage, an office culture to navigate and a new position in the household. Saraki now has a team of counselors to help these new workers adjust so they understand goals and choices. Counseling helped a young worker with Down syndrome deal with departure after a friendly young woman left his department. He understands now that other colleagues who are nice to him may be reassigned as well.

I observed Saraki's focus the last time that I was in Asunción. Our meeting with some of the new workers ran late and Cabezudo and I rushed to pick up her daughter Azul, 8, from ballet class. "Mommy, you are late again," Azul said, but she understands how important her mother's work is for Paraguayans like her baby brother. Five years ago, Cabezudo brought home Juanqui, an orphan with Down syndrome, and with their children's approval, she and Montiel adopted him. He will soon be 6 and Cabezudo fears that "schools in Paraguay are not ready to receive Juanqui or others like him." With a strong grassroots network supporting Saraki, and more activists working toward the same goal, Cabezudo might find the right classroom for Juanqui and pick Azul up on time.

Eduardo Rodríguez-Frías is the IAF's webmaster.



On the job: Verónica Gaona, working the drive-thru, and Diana Fajardo, secretary, Banco VISION. Below, interviewing in sign language at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



A Diplomat for Disability Rights

When President Barack Obama took office in 2009, he confirmed his commitment to disability rights, explicit in his campaign, by creating several top-level advisory positions in key government agencies. Judith Heumann was his choice for the Department of State. Uniquely qualified, Heumann began her professional career as the first person to teach from a wheelchair in the New York public school system, which had previously declared her a fire hazard—twice, first as a student and then as a job applicant. She later served in the U.S. Department of Education under President Clinton, at the World Bank and as director of Department of Disability Services of the District of Columbia.

How did you become involved in disability rights?

I had polio as a toddler in 1949 and I learned early that people's views of what I could do were very limited. The local public school denied me an education because I was in a wheelchair, even though I didn't require special accommodation. Thanks to my parents, who organized other families to make schools in New York more accessible, I did go to high school with able-bodied students. In the 1960s, I started to lobby for legislation on accessibility. At university I collaborated with others to get services for disabled students. After I graduated, I sued New York's Board of Education, which had denied me a teaching job on the basis of my disability. I helped found Disabled in Action, which is still active. At a time when most organizations focused on a single disability, it dealt with multiple types. We raised awareness of our problems, such as segregation into sheltered workshops that paid low wages and had poor conditions. We also focused on education, transportation and housing. As a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley, I worked to set up the first community-based, nonresidential centers for independent living, which are now all over the U.S., Asia and Latin America.

What is your approach?

It's fair to say that I'm an activist. Others can support us but disabled people have to be our own spokespersons. I have always worked to amplify our

voices and ensure that we move away from the medical model to a rights-based one. A lot of our work over the last decades focused on legislation but also on helping people with disabilities and their parents realize that human and civil rights apply to disabled individuals. Inspired by the civil rights and the women's movement, we initially wanted to start organizations, develop an agenda and convince rights-based groups to be more inclusive. It took a good number of years but I think we've been successful.

What do you do at the Department of State?

My job is to inform the staff here about the violation of the rights of people with disabilities, to highlight the need to integrate disability into diplomacy and foreign policy, and to further understanding of this population. Disabilities aren't always visible. Individuals with mental health issues, HIV, diabetes, epilepsy or learning difficulties are disabled and they are protected from discrimination under U.S. law. I help embassies reach out to them. My office also raises these issues with foreign governments and civil society, so they know that disability rights are part of the Department's agenda.

What has your office accomplished?

We've been working across the Department to integrate disabilities more effectively. More staff is now aware that when children with disabilities are denied an education, the consequence is a lack of employment opportunities. We send U.S. experts to advise legislative staff in countries that are developing statutes based on the Americans with Disabilities Act and other U.S. laws. The Department recently awarded a grant to Mobility International U.S.A. to work in Mexico, Kenya and Vietnam, to teach civil society organizations about these laws. The Department's International Visitors Program brings more individuals with disabilities to the United States to learn about our laws and experience accessible transportation and hotels. People are learning that inclusion is not that difficult. The Department of State's Office of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor now covers



Courtesy Juliana Thomas/Clinton Global Initiative

Judith Heumann, center, Special Advisor for International Disability Rights, U.S. Department of State.

violations of the rights of the disabled in its reporting. The Department's report on trafficking in persons, which documents the sex trade, now also includes the role of disability. These documents are available on the websites of each embassy in English and the language of the host country.

What is civil society doing in Latin America?

Latin America is big and diverse. Some countries have been working on these issues longer and are more advanced, Brazil, for example, with respect to mainstreaming children in school. In Paraguay, mainstreaming has not yet come to the forefront. Everywhere we see that laws aren't strong enough or aren't enforced. But where citizens can exercise their right to vote, disabled people, their families and friends are helping elect officials who support disability rights. Most countries in Latin America have ratified the U.N. Convention, which civil society has used as an anchor, to push governments to do more. Many organizations are learning to write shadow reports that support or criticize what governments are doing or not doing.

What about the expense of inclusion?

Cost is a shortsighted, knee-jerk excuse for not doing something. Is it cheaper to construct an accessible building than to retrofit it later? Isn't accessibility important for all society, not just for people with physical disabilities? Many people aren't born with disabilities, they acquire them later in life. Do we want those people out of the work force? Low-cost adaptation lets them continue to earn income, which they spend in the economy, rather than depend on benefits. Some people need and should receive benefits but we need to change presumption that we should only give them enough money to survive on the edge.

How can U.S. foreign assistance further inclusion?

It is very important to integrate disability into all programs that IAF and other donors are funding. I believe that if grantees or prospective grantees understand that inclusion is an expectation, they will learn how to make their work reach people with disabilities. At the Department of State, we are moving more and more toward convincing our grantees that this is an important issue.—*E.R.-F.*

Audits: Beyond the Bottom Line

By Michael Campbell

Should grantee staff welcome a visit from an auditor contracted by the Inter-American Foundation? That wasn't Zulima Sánchez's initial impulse. As the accountant for Fundación Sumapaz she couldn't sleep for several days before the first audit of the Colombian grantee's 2010 IAF award. Sumapaz, which works with 150 grassroots groups to further human rights in Medellín, has received funding from various international donors but the only one to require an audit has been the IAF. The auditor, Claudia Moreno of Grant Thornton Fast, had notified Sumapaz that she would be on site for up to six days and Sánchez had been warned by colleagues to expect the worst. "We were really scared," she recalled. "If she planned to take that long, she would go through everything with a fine-toothed comb." The exercise

lasted one very intense week, with 12-hour days fairly typical, a schedule that would be followed in subsequent reviews. Sumapaz emerged with a clean audit. Additionally, Sánchez commented, "Claudia helped us understand that the purpose was to see how we were doing, and that calmed our fears."

Why audit?

The funding disbursed by the IAF to any single grantee is below the threshold triggering mandatory audits per U.S. government regulations. However, the IAF has a duty to ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars are used for the intended purpose and the most reliable way to fulfill this obligation is via audits that apply the standards of the U.S. government as well as the laws and regulations of the country in which the grantee



The IAF auditor corps.

Edith Bermúdez

resides. So the IAF contracts certified public accounting firms in Latin America to review the finances of virtually all organizations receiving IAF awards. The firms are usually located in the same country as the grantees whose accounts they review, but the auditors and the grantee staff may live worlds apart.

“Auditors are trained only to review for-profit enterprises, not grassroots and nongovernmental organizations,” explained Carlos Lingán, the Peruvian who, with 30 years of service, is the dean of the IAF’s auditor corps. “There is a huge difference.” Nongovernmental organizations like Sumapaz often closely resemble a business, with the same practices in place and an accountant on staff. But grassroots groups might not even have a bank account. If they do, they often cannot use checks because local merchants deal only in cash. In some areas, invoices and receipts are unknown. Enrique Imperiali, who has audited grantees in Argentina, remembers consulting his Peruvian colleague shortly after coming on board. “You are going to see things you have never imagined as a professional,” Lingán advised.

“He was right,” Imperiali commented—emphatically.

Lingán insists that the auditor is crucial to getting a grassroots group off to a good start. “Many groups are isolated from urban centers and just haven’t had the exposure to concepts of record-keeping to substantiate compliance,” Lingán explained. “Our job becomes to teach such principles as which documents are required as evidence and why.” Once grantee staff learns what is expected, he said, they usually do a good job.

Practically speaking, preparation for the IAF’s audit begins in the orientation offered to all new grantees, often on site. “This meeting takes place before the first disbursement,” said accountant Carlos Álvarez Balbás, whose firm audits Mexican grantees. “It’s a very special aspect of the IAF’s work. No other donor has anything like it.”

The IAF representative attends the orientation along with the local auditor and contractors who perform liaison services or verify the programmatic results of the IAF’s investment. It begins with a discussion of the role of each and a meticulous review, section by section, of the obligations detailed in the grantee’s agreement with the IAF. The auditor explains how to track IAF and counterpart resources,

the internal controls that must be in place, what type of receipts must be produced for the various kinds of expenditures. The goal is to demystify the process and build rapport. If anyone has concerns, adjustments can be made on the spot. “It’s a chance to assure that things turn out well,” Álvarez Balbás explained. “We let the grantee know that we are not the police; our attitude is always preventive. The important thing is that we can verify that funds were spent according to the grant agreement.”

The audit

A year after the orientation, the auditor visits the grantee, usually for between three and five days, to review the accounts and the policies that assure compliance with the grant agreement and with applicable local laws and U.S. government regulations. “We don’t show up by surprise,” Álvarez Balbás clarified. “We set a mutually agreeable date. When we arrive, the grantee gives us the information requested—bills, receipts, pay stubs, checks, confirmation from third parties as proof of how the IAF funds were used—and we begin the document review and our observation.

“Many awards include funds for equipment, so we verify that it is there. Sometimes the grantee is a formal organization that gives subgrants, like a little IAF. We visit selected subgrantees to confirm that they received the money and are using it as agreed upon. When grants include resources for microcredit, we visit borrowers to confirm that they received the money, they agree with what the grantee claims they owe and the loan was used as intended. Borrowers might get behind because they are at the mercy of nature—without sufficient rain, the harvest fails and cattle may die. But in eight years of auditing IAF-funded microcredit programs, I have never come across anyone who took the loan and ran or who used it for other than the purpose agreed upon.”

All IAF grantees are expected to invest their own resources in their IAF-funded projects or mobilize funds from other donors, or a combination of both, which is reflected in the grant agreement. In fiscal 2013, grantees committed \$16.4 million in cash and in kind toward their projects more than matched the IAF’s own investment of \$12.6 million. “Success is supposed to result from the convergence of all these resources,” explained Álvarez Balbás, “and a grantee’s



Víctor Hernández, of Despacho Alvarez Balbás, fourth from the left, conducted audits of former grantee K'inál Antsetik in Chiapas, Mexico, whose financial reports and records confirmed the members' professionalism.

failure to produce a significant portion of the counterpart pledged could be reflected in our report.” Tracking counterpart can prove challenging. A major difficulty is determining the value of contributions in kind: a loan of space; services offered pro bono; the use of tools, looms or a vehicle. Often the historical cost of the asset is irrelevant to its value as a donation. Volunteer labor might be a little easier to appraise if hours worked are recorded and assigned a value consistent with the market rate. What can be proved with more certainty is that a contribution materialized. “The prima facie evidence is that something got done, someone did it,” Álvarez Balbas explained.

Auditors also check the grantee’s systems of internal controls—the processes intended to reduce the possibility of errors and misuse of funds and assure that resources are adequately safeguarded and efficiently used, that reliable data are collected and reported, and that the grantee complies with laws and regulations. Common material weaknesses include the assignment of multiple administrative responsibilities to a single individual, the absence of a record logging

vehicle use, and the failure to reconcile monthly bank statements with the organization’s books. If internal controls are extremely weak, an auditor will be unable to express an opinion on the accuracy of the financial statements and compliance with the grant agreement. Orientation of new grantees helps prevent this.

Grantee staff receive a draft of the auditor’s report and can respond to the findings. “Some people think that a successful audit results in multiple qualifications,” Álvarez Balbás said, referring to issues identified for correction. I think that if the audit is well planned, well understood, it should result in no qualifications. We give the grantee an opportunity to explain any, which might make us aware of something we didn’t know. There is a space in the finalized report where the grantee can comment. Then the report is sent to the IAF. In a subsequent audit, the first thing we do is verify whether the grantee complied with the recommendations to resolve any qualification. In some areas of Mexico, for example, grassroots groups that operate according to *usos y costumbres* [traditional indigenous practices]

might not have enrolled employees in the Mexican social security system. We would indicate in the subsequent report how that matter was resolved.”

A balancing act

Auditing firms apply to work with the IAF via an open solicitation. The resulting contracts assure that the IAF has the services it requires for five years and that the successful bidders have a defined income stream. Auditors assigned to IAF grantees have undergraduate degrees in accounting and often an M.A. or Ph.D. Many have studied economics, finance, marketing, management, statistics and law. Often they have acquired extensive experience in development via contracts with the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the United Nations and the European Union. The senior auditor assigned to IAF grantees has had at least two years of experience. All firms contracted have employees in their hierarchy who review the senior auditor’s work.

Auditors are required to maintain independence, in fact and in appearance, from the entity audited and failure to do so can land accounting firms in hot water. Maintaining independence can be a tight balancing act. Assistance with a financial report might be acceptable as is provision of some training. But involvement in the organization’s management or decision-making would be out of bounds. The international standard is how an objective third party with knowledge of the relevant facts would view the relationship. Conforming to this standard can result in misunderstandings. An IAF grantee located in a remote village once prepared an elaborate meal for the auditor, who rejected the food. This led to the impression that the auditor had interpreted the offering as a bribe when he was really just following his firm’s prohibition on accepting gifts in any form while conducting an audit.

“The auditor must not compromise,” Imperiali advised. “But independence does not mean distance. The auditor must understand and be sensitive to the context.” Lingán became acutely aware of context when his first audit for the IAF took him to a group of alpaca herders in a remote area of southern Peru. “I was with a big-time auditing firm and I did the best that I could, but everything I knew seemed useless,” he recalled. “I had many questions and I felt I had to

avoid offending the grantee.” Lingán finally consulted an anthropologist, a friend from his university days. “He taught me the nuances that I would need to master and that aren’t in any book.”

When problems arise

During the audit, the grantee organization must be prepared to address what an auditor might deem questionable expenditures and practices. Some differences can be resolved while the auditor is on site, or shortly thereafter, and those are not reported to the IAF. “Usually the problems are due to errors, not to bad faith,” explained Lilia Téllez Magaña, who works with Álvarez Balbás’ firm.

Sensitivity is definitely called for at this stage. “It’s normal when we audit a business and have a question, to tell the accountant what we need and the accountant knows exactly where the information is kept,” Lingán said. “We can’t be as direct with a grassroots group that doesn’t have a background in accounting. We have to be careful not to sound accusatory or make the problem appear worse than it is. Grassroots groups sometimes keep records differently, in a way that might seem like ‘orderly disorder,’ but more often than not they have the information we need filed away in a corner.”

Unreconciled discrepancies must be noted in the auditor’s report and can lead to a qualification of the opinion on the organization’s substantial compliance with the grant agreement. The IAF follows up on issues identified, material or not. “For other donors a problem identified during an audit will probably lead to termination of the grant,” said Jenny Petrow, whose portfolio includes Haiti, Dominican Republic and the English-speaking Caribbean. “At the IAF, a problem could represent an interim step at which point we work with the grantee to remedy the weakness identified.” The representative or the IAF’s local liaison might, for example, visit the grantee to help reconcile accounts or prepare financial statements. If, say, \$5,000 in funds has not been used per the agreement, the representative could direct the grantee to reimburse the bank account and submit proof of the deposit.

Among examples of major noncompliance are inadequate accounting records and the unauthorized use of funds, which can include overspending on line items or working outside the geographic area or



Courtesy Carlos Lingán



Carlos Lingán in 1987 with grassroots grantees audited at 5,000 meters above sea level in the Peruvian Andes. (Lingán, center, left photo; seated in white shirt and cap, right photo.)

demographic group identified in the grant agreement. Malfeasance is rare—Álvarez Balbás reported a single case of what he termed “bad intentions” in the eight years his firm has audited the IAF’s substantial Mexico portfolio. A finding of malfeasance will trigger a freeze on the grantee’s ability to spend grant funds as well as an investigation. The IAF’s oversight committee decides whether termination is merited. The organization terminated may have to return unspent funds and surrender assets purchased with IAF resources—vehicles, computers, other office equipment. Refusal to reimburse the IAF is extremely rare and is referred to the Office of Inspector General of the United States Agency for International Development, as is evidence of fraud or gross negligence, also highly unusual.

The exceptionally low rate of noncompliance with grant agreements validates the IAF’s selection and monitoring processes. Only 2 percent of audited IAF grantees have been the subject of first and second reports identifying significant issues. Often related to internal controls, these issues are usually resolved by the third audit. The result is often a better-managed organization.

Value added

A clean audit confirms to the IAF representatives that the group is living up to expectations. For the

grantee, interaction with the auditor has become a value added to the IAF grant that often yields returns beyond accountability for the use of IAF funds—returns that flow long after the final disbursement. “We have seen the audit exercise develop the administrative skills that permit a grassroots group to manage its own resources later or resources from another donor or resources of a larger organization,” said Álvarez Balbás. “Individuals develop as well. I have witnessed this in the people responsible for the accounts. They may start with no experience, but with the explanations offered during the orientation and their own efforts, within a month they can use the computer to turn out a financial report.”

“The audit is indispensable, although it can be very difficult for grassroots groups to understand at first,” commented Laura Saravide, the director of former IAF grantee Fundación Malinalco in Mexico City. “Saravide’s community foundation used its IAF award to fund grassroots subgrantees and she confirmed the transformation that Álvarez Balbás described. “Members learned to put things in order, to provide receipts, to reconcile accounts,” she continued. “The audit forced them to professionalize their work, to go from paper to computerized records. I saw them work late to produce impeccable documentation. We never approached the audit with fear. Instead we con-

sidered the audit a chance to pause and see where we were and we thought it was great that outsiders would look at what we had accomplished.”

For some organizations, the IAF award represents the largest infusion of resources ever received, which could be a destabilizing factor. The audit provides assurance that the funds are properly managed. According to Porfirio Ortiz, vice president of Las Marías 93, a coffee cooperative in Chinameca, San Miguel, El Salvador, five clean audits confirmed to the co-op’s 63 members that the award was well spent. Will Aguilar, director of Grupo Juvenil Dion (GJD), which offers vocational education to young Hondurans, said the annual audit not only communicates the transparency of GJD operations to members but to the community served and foreign donors.

Lessons from the grassroots

When Carlos Lingán cites the IAF’s emphasis on learning as a goal of its support, he clarifies that the lessons flow in two directions. “Sometimes the formulas we were taught in university just don’t work and we learn best in the field,” he said. Insights gleaned can refine an auditor’s perspective on his or her work. “It has made me aware that I have to apply the norms of the profession but must also understand the context,” Imperiali reiterated to preface a story he considers illustrative. The professional service rendered was the final audit of a project undertaken by WARMI, a grassroots organization of indigenous Argentine women. (See page 2.) The context was a community 3,000 meters above sea level, two hours from Abrapampa, the nearest town, and more than 1,500 kilometers from Buenos Aires.

“By evening of the second day, most of the information had been produced but I still had questions about missing documentation,” Imperiali recalled. “Specifically, the financial records, really a notebook with all of the transactions, included a reference to wool that the organization collected from various herders and organized for a better marketing position. I asked Rosario Quispe about the lack of supporting invoices from the herders dating from the delivery of the wool.

“She must have wondered who this nitwit from Buenos Aires was. Gesturing to a mountain soaring some 3,500 meters, she explained very patiently but

firmly, ‘One of the herders lives up there. He comes here on foot once a month, weather permitting. The walk takes him a full day. If you think we should, the next time he comes we will ask him to issue invoices.’ I understood immediately that my requirement was unnecessary, that I could do my work perfectly well using the records available. I also understood the extraordinary effort required of WARMI to see the project through.”

Carlos Lingán insists he did not really get to know Peru until he traveled to the far-flung locations where IAF grantees work. “Going into the field, you really experience how people live, their folk ways, their wisdom that dates back centuries, their natural medicines, how they tend their crops and animals,” he said. “Those are some of the things I have learned about. You get to know your country and love it more, appreciate it more.”

“We meet people who are very committed to this country, whom we would not otherwise get to know,” said Álvarez Balbás. “I have learned about their ability to organize, their solidarity, their honesty. Their organizations develop because their projects are not imposed but are rooted in an idea generated by the communities themselves. As a firm we do very impersonal work so it’s gratifying to see a direct relationship between our audits and the development of our country.” Accountant Victor Hernández, who works with Álvarez Balbás, summarized the experience: “It’s feedback that feeds us.”

Next steps

Beginning in fiscal 2014, all grantees will be audited after their first year of IAF funding and the frequency of subsequent audits will depend on those results and on recommendations of the IAF representative, the amount of the award and other criteria. The IAF’s auditors will continue to provide grantees cost-effective oversight and access to expert advice for the duration of their funding. The IAF’s audit program works because auditors successfully balance independence with the guidance that helps grantees master important skills as they comply with the grant agreement.

Michael Campbell has coordinated audits for IAF’s Office of Evaluation since 2006.



Courtesy Eric Hirsch

Desco's auditors with entrepreneur Rogelio Taco Visa, center. Opposite page, Eric Hirsch.

Grassroots Accountability in Colca

The audit is a ubiquitous exercise in Peru's Colca Valley, conducted across a range of grassroots initiatives. Reviewing the books is the point of departure for monitoring how interventions are working, sometimes offering teachable moments as individuals and organizations account for donor funds. As an IAF Fellow, I observed audits on site visits to the Southern Sierra Project, undertaken by the Peruvian Ministry of Agriculture; during the donor's inspection of a children's shelter and kindergarten; and with Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo (Desco), my affiliate during my IAF-sponsored research. (For the record, none of the organizations I visited had ever received IAF funding.) Colca's economy owes much of its current bustle to the presence of Desco, which was among the first grassroots groups in the region to organize 30 years ago, when communities were far more isolated by the treacherous highlands separating them from Arequipa, one of southern Peru's economic hubs. Today Desco sets Colca's development agenda, a potent force in a vibrant tangle of

donor investment, microcredit institutions and heightened appreciation for the natural and cultural resources at hand as vital assets.

Desco staff expends significant time and energy on auditing and being audited, an activity that anchors everyday operations. For several months, I worked on Desco's initiative to extend seed capital to 20 young indigenous entrepreneurs and technical assistance to 30 others, all selected via a contest for the most promising business plans. The awards channeled through Desco were funded by a Peruvian government agency focused on job creation. In anticipation of the audits that would track the donor's investment, Desco staff gave each participant a notebook for recording expenses, earnings and profits. This notebook, around which Desco's staff organized visits, is the same tool that the government donor uses to audit Desco itself. Many of the participating entrepreneurs, especially those whose businesses were somewhat established by the time they began receiving Desco's support, already had a system in place

for tracking their cash flow. But the new notebooks created uniformity, said Fabiola Dapino, Desco's management expert, and realigned the diverse practices to comply with the government donor's strict requirements. They also served to combine training in the relationship between investment and profit with a legible record of progress or needs.

For some participants, filling out the notebook was not intuitive; for others, the audit became a tool for putting both business plan and attitude on track. Rogelio Taco Visa, who raises *cuy*, the guinea pigs that are a staple of the Andean diet, was labeled the least promising of the young entrepreneurs, an assessment he admits that he himself shared. It was Desco's relentless insistence on reviewing his notebook, in anticipation of the March visit from the government donor's auditor, that made Taco Visa take his business seriously. He began to take the notebook seriously, too, as the columns for income and salary filled with increasingly larger numbers. Overcoming his late start, he built a massive pen and developed into one of Colca's most productive *cuy* farmers. When the auditor arrived, Taco Visa thanked him and Desco and, as Fabiola Dapino broke open a bottle of rum hanging from the lintel of the brand new barn, declared his new enterprise open for business.

Another enterprise, originally planned as an outlet for dairy products, appeared to be fizzling in early 2014. Its proprietors, two brothers, had used a loan and some of Desco's seed capital intended for the dairy business to launch an Internet café that rapidly cornered the market in their village. Local officials relied on the café to communicate via email, children flocked to its videogames and services soon expanded to include the installation of cable satellites and telephone as well as Internet connections in homes throughout the community. The brothers still worked on the dairy business, but the café and its ancillary services consumed most of their energy as they struggled to keep up with the brisk demand. Their success was impressive and Desco was supportive but also made clear that the dairy enterprise, not the café, would be the subject of the government donor's audit. This raised some interesting questions: Should the audit be about technical conformity with the approved business plan that was not yielding a return on the government's investment or about

the brothers' resourcefulness in coming up with a new idea that was? Could an audit weigh the specific terms and conditions of the award against the Peruvian government's general goal of job creation?

Desco preferred to stay focused on the target of economic development, but reprogramming the donor's funds had never been an option. When the government auditor appeared, he expressed admiration for the electronics business and appreciation for the complexities that arise when innovative entrepreneurs plug into ideas. Because of time constraints, he postponed auditing the dairy enterprise, which gave the brothers time to try to make it a going concern. The auditor, Desco's staff and the brothers agreed: the use of the donor's funds had to be rigorously documented but a purpose of the audit was to learn what works in grassroots development, what doesn't and why.

Many in government and in nongovernmental organizations lament what Marilyn Strathern describes in *Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics, and the Academy* (London: 2000). An "audit culture," Strathern explains, requires an institution to gear all of its energy toward the ritual rather than allow the use of the audit as a simple tool for aiding transparency and reflection and for ensuring that an institution's accounts are settled. Like anything else cultural, audits are processes whose complexity depends on context. In Colca, people involved in all phases of grassroots development have come to see the audit strike a balance between intervention on a donor's terms and allowing communities to thrive on their own.—Eric Hirsch, Ph.D. candidate in anthropology, University of Chicago; IAF Grassroots Development Fellow, 2013-2014



How Laws Constrain Freedom of Association in the Americas

By Jocelyn Nieva

Everyone has the right to associate freely for ideological, religious, political, economic, labor, social, cultural, sports, or other purposes.

The American Convention on Human Rights, Article 16

Across the Americas, people come together in civil society organizations (CSOs) to address problems of all kinds—working to meet basic needs like clean water or healthcare, demanding respect for human rights, advocating for transparency in government, among others. Article 16 of the American Convention on Human Rights, cited above, recognizes the freedom to associate in these ways, “subject only to such restrictions established by law as may be necessary in a democratic society, in the interest of national security, public safety or public order, or to protect public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others.” Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights contains a virtually identical provision, as do other multilateral agreements.

Some people choose to collaborate informally, for example, in a neighborhood association. Others seek formal recognition, which typically requires initial disclosure of extensive information about the organization along with regular reporting, but offers advantages such as tax-exempt status and access to government funding. The Convention and the Covenant, which have been ratified by the vast majority of nations in the Americas, require governments to enact legislation that facilitates the formation and operation of CSOs. As these treaties have been interpreted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur for Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, such laws must ensure, for example, that CSOs can be recognized quickly and inexpensively, function with minimal intrusion from government officials

and raise funds from any legal source. Unfortunately, in Latin American countries with governments of all ideological orientations, these statutes may be hard to locate, ambiguously written and enforced through arbitrary or discriminatory practices.

Since 2007, I have worked with the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), which collaborates with partners in more than 100 countries to protect free association, encourage civic participation and facilitate philanthropy. ICNL is a leading authority on international law and practice regulating non-profits, and www.icnl.org is a comprehensive source for statutes, analysis and reference materials, including, for example, *Guidelines for Laws Affecting Civic Organizations*.¹ As the ICNL’s senior legal advisor for Latin America, I know from experience that, with regard to freedom of association, governments throughout Latin America often fail to meet their obligations under the Convention and the Covenant. I frequently hear stories of how this inhibits the work of civil society:

- A Nicaraguan colleague noted that women’s self-help groups that she supports struggle to keep up with legal requirements that change frequently because, after nearly 20 years on the books, the law on CSOs has no accompanying body of regulations and each new director of the agency providing oversight interprets the law differently. Afraid of fines for unintentional noncompliance, some groups reduce their activities to stay under the radar.
- An HIV/AIDS activist claimed that Honduran officials occupied his organization’s office for months while they conducted an open-ended audit that

drained staff time and resources, reducing the organization's ability to serve a vulnerable population. He believes that his CSO was targeted for this unusual investigation because of the stigma associated with its mission.

- Leaders of Mexican community foundations are frustrated that, because their organizations receive tax-deductible contributions, they are prohibited from making grants to informally constituted grassroots groups. To preserve their own favorable tax treatment Mexican community foundations can only donate in kind to such groups, which deprives them of the experience in management that grants of cash would bring.
- An Ecuadorian lawyer whose organization is dedicated to freedom of the press told me that the government relied on a new law to reassign oversight of his organization to a ministry that has repeatedly condemned it in the media. The law requires all existing civil society organizations to re-register, forcing his organization to request legal recognition from the same ministry that routinely denounces it as illegitimate. Under this new law, an environmental organization was forced to disband, and the activist fears that the ministry will soon dissolve his organization as well.

These are not isolated incidents; they reflect trends in legislation and enforcement that broadly and negatively impact all classes of CSOs. In an unfavorable or hostile legal environment, CSOs struggle to form, operate and deliver services to the public. A recent study of the legal environment in Panama revealed an extreme example of vaguely written laws inconsistently applied.² According to the study, Panamanians who want to work together as a formally recognized group would need to sort through as many as 15 different laws, regulations and executive orders just to learn the rules for becoming legally constituted and maintaining that status. Even if the group wanted to try to navigate such a complicated web of laws on its own, the authorities will only consider and respond to applications submitted by an attorney to the designated office in the capital city. The expenses of legal advice and travel are just the beginning of a process that can take a year or longer. An official interviewed for the study estimated that

he rejects 99 percent of all applications as technically insufficient upon their initial submission. To progress any further toward approval, those applications must then be corrected and refiled. While the group is in legal limbo, it may be unable to enter into contracts, receive grants or even open a bank account, jeopardizing the public interest.

Until recently, Bolivia presented a different challenge. Constitutional reform eliminated the law that regulated CSOs operating in more than one geographic department, and the legislature took close to three years to enact a replacement. In the interim, applications for legal recognition of new organizations were paralyzed, preventing Bolivians from formally coming together to address shared problems. In 2012, representatives of Panamanian and Bolivian CSOs together with counterparts from Ecuador, Peru and Nicaragua brought these and other legal barriers to free association to the attention of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in the first regional hearing on the subject. The Rapporteurship for Human Rights Defenders, a body within the IACHR appointed to further the rights of civil society, acknowledged the importance of the testimony at this regional hearing, and it continues to focus on threats to freedom of association.

Consolidating the requirements for formal recognition and for the operational cycle of a CSO into a single enabling law could help resolve some of these problems, but recent trends grant government officials tremendous leeway to interpret the rules. Bolivia's Law and Regulations on Awarding Legal Personalities, passed in 2013, for example, subject new organizations to ambiguously drafted and costly procedures for registering and require the submission of an exceptionally long list of documents. The new law applies equally to organizations that became legally constituted *before its enactment*; they must re-register in compliance with the same new requirements, even though their documentation may be old, missing or inconsistent with the new standards. An organization that fails to comply with any provision of the new law, no matter how minor, can be shut down.

Ecuador's Presidential Decree No. 16, also issued in 2013, echoes many of the provisions in the Bolivian laws, including the requirement to re-register and the exceedingly broad grounds for denying an applica-

tion or withdrawing an organization's status as legally constituted. Decree No. 16 includes unusual restrictions, as well, for example, the requirement to accept as members any person or persons claiming a "legitimate interest" in the work of the organization. So if officials of a mining company asserted a "legitimate interest," an organization whose purpose is to protect the environment around the mines would have no choice but to admit them as members. Concern with the implications of Decree No. 16 is not hypothetical: On Dec. 4, 2013, the Pachamama Foundation, an organization that had been effective in furthering environmental protection in indigenous territories, was summarily dissolved for alleged violations of Decree No. 16. The official justification appropriated the language of the American Convention to accuse the organization of "interference in public policies that undermines internal or external State security [and] that might affect public peace."

Laws like those just described that determine the rules under which CSOs form and operate, as well as other specialized statutes, including applicable provisions of the tax code, can have a significant impact on financial survival. Access to international donors in particular is threatened by ambiguous laws that may impose a government filter on essential funding. This type of constraint represents another trend. Legislation has been proposed in Haiti that could, for example, prevent informally constituted grassroots groups from receiving foreign assistance and preclude legally registered CSOs from receiving foreign funds for activities that do not match the thematic and geographic priorities of the government's development plan. Certainly governments have a responsibility to oversee and direct development carried out with state participation, but government officials cannot know every need in every corner of the country. Under such a law, worthy ideas for resolving desperate needs with self-help and creativity could be starved of international support. Such sweeping restrictions are difficult to reconcile with international standards for free association.³

Venezuela's Law on Political Sovereignty and National Self-determination ("Political Sovereignty Law") of December 2010 takes a different approach to regulating international cooperation. That law imposes restrictions on foreign funding to "organizations whose purpose is to promote, divulge, inform or defend citizens' full exercise of their *political rights*"

(emphasis added)—without ever defining "political rights." Because the Political Sovereignty Law has not yet been enforced, it is not clear how its terms will be interpreted. Venezuela's official denunciation of the Convention in 2013, suggests, however, that the government may not enforce the Political Sovereignty Law in a manner consistent with inter-American standards on the right to free association.

The Political Sovereignty Law and similar legislation proposed or enacted in countries throughout the region have had a chilling effect on organizations devoted to legitimate activities such as observing elections, monitoring corruption and furthering human rights, as well as on foreign donors, many of whom have chosen to lower their profiles, often by redirecting efforts and funding or pulling out of a country altogether, to the detriment of the public interest. Minister Søren Pind, who heads the Danish International Cooperation, commented on his government's decision to withhold \$18 million in aid that had been committed to Nicaraguan civil society rather than accept conditions on that aid: "This is the decision the Nicaraguan government has made," he said, according to an article published in *La Prensa* of Feb. 18, 2011. "It will damage other partners, something that truly aggrieves me. For Denmark, it is indispensable that we are able to support civil society. But this is no longer possible."⁴

In most countries in Latin America, CSOs that serve the public good are tax-exempt and donors can deduct contributions to them from taxable income. (For information on the tax laws for CSOs and donors in many Latin American countries, see <http://www.cof.org/global-grantmaking/country-notes>.) Tax laws are frequently just as difficult to decipher as the laws described above and impose such stringent requirements that the organizations intended to benefit from them may be unable to take advantage of the preferential treatment. Mexican CSOs, for example, can lose their eligibility to receive tax-deductible donations if they spend more than 5 percent of their donations on administrative expenses, which may include personnel, rent, utilities and other routine costs that are vital to their operations. As a practical matter, CSOs may limit their investment in institutional development in order to comply with the extraordinarily low ceiling of 5 percent. Particularly

at a time of declining international funding for the sector, reduced incentives for charitable giving, and restrictions on the organizations that benefit from tax relief, erode sustainability.

In light of these challenges, what can be done to encourage reforms so that the legal environment better enables CSOs to contribute to their communities? Here are a few approaches that have proved helpful:

- *Enactment of laws consistent with international standards on freedom of association.* In this connection, President Dilma Rousseff has championed legal reform in Brazil through a national dialogue involving representatives of government, civil society, business, academia and other interested sectors. This inclusive approach could be a model for the region.
- *Proper enforcement of enabling legislation.* Three years after the Honduran Congress enacted the Special Promotion Law for Nongovernmental Development Organizations, its provisions have not been enforced. Honduran CSOs are still subject to outdated, arbitrary requirements that increase the cost of filing applications and reports and prolong delays. An umbrella organization, the Federation of Development Organizations of Honduras (FOPRIDEH), is working to ensure that the sector will soon benefit by teaching staff from CSOs about their organizations' rights and obligations under the new law and helping train government officials in effective practices from other countries so that they might improve oversight of the sector.
- *Access to professional advice from lawyers and accountants sufficiently trained to help CSOs comply with their legal obligations.* Across the Americas, law schools are beginning to offer training in CSO law. At the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City, students supervised by licensed attorneys master the complex tax laws governing CSOs and then prepare tax filings for CSOs at no cost. The students graduate with a greater understanding of their clients' work as well as the skills to provide specialized legal services to other tax-exempt organizations. This model as well as several other approaches are detailed in ICNL's 2013 publication *Promoviendo la Enseñanza del Derecho de las Organizaciones de Sociedad Civil en América Latina: Aportes de Expertos Regionales*.⁵

- *Greater understanding of the rights and protections applicable to CSOs and the development of effective advocacy.* Constitutions throughout Latin America recognize freedom of association as a fundamental right, but government officials in many countries condemn CSOs as illegitimate—particularly when they advocate for public policies different from those of the administration in office. CSOs must acquire the skills necessary to defend the sector. The ability to explain its rights and contributions, and provide accurate data on restrictions on the right to free association will enable CSOs to enlist the private sector, churches, academics and other groups as allies.

International donors—particularly those that fund grassroots organizations, like the Inter-American Foundation—should be aware that the impact of laws inhibiting civil society is far-reaching. Laws can silence independent voices, cloud the vision of those monitoring government programs and otherwise interfere with the ability of ordinary people to organize to improve their communities. Clear laws that conform to international standards on the right to free association and are applied consistently and fairly would benefit all civil society organizations, their supporters and, especially, those whom they serve.

Before joining ICNL, Jocelyn Nieva served as the IAF's assistant general counsel from 2003 to early 2007. She can be reached at jnieva@icnl.org.

¹ www.icnl.org/research/resources/assessment/guidelines_en.pdf.

² www.icnl.org/programs/lac/Entorno%20Legal%20Panama%20ACPJ.pdf.

³ For standards on the right to receive funding from international donors, see the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' *Second Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas*, paragraph 183, (2011) at www.oas.org/en/iachr/defenders/docs/pdf/defenders2011.pdf, and the report published April 24, 2013, by the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association, www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session23/A.HRC.23.39_EN.pdf.

⁴ <http://m.laprensa.com.ni/politica/52506>.

⁵ www.icnl.org/programs/lac/derecho/teaching-cso-law.html.

Forum for Fellows' Findings: Women and the Globalized Economy

The IAF complements its grants furthering bottom-up, self-help development with a Fellowship Program funding academic research into the context and trends that affect the efforts of the organized poor and the groups that support them in Latin America and the Caribbean. This commitment to scholarship at the grassroots dates almost as far back as launch of the IAF's grant program in the early 1970s. To date, IAF Fellowships have reached 1,134 Ph.D. and master's candidates as well as social entrepreneurs pursuing independent study. Since 2007, the IAF has offered support for doctoral dissertation research by students from throughout the hemisphere who are enrolled in universities in the United States.

For the past four years, the IAF has issued an annual invitation to all alumni of recent Fellowship cycles to submit manuscripts for publication pending a rigorous review by an anonymous subcommittee of the scholars who scrutinize application for the IAF's Grassroots Development Fellowships. This year's jury selected two manuscripts for publication in this issue. Coincidentally, the successful writers, Jelena Radovic Fanta and Rebecca Nelson, both wrote on women at the grassroots who work in the vast and complex globalized economy and must reconcile the benefits and burdens of their involvement.

We remain excited about this feature of our publications. Most obviously, it brings some of the benefit of the Fellowship Program to a broader audience and it represents another credential for the authors whose work appears here. But the competition has value even for those whose manuscripts were not selected because of the thoughtful feedback that the reviewers communicate, through the IAF, to each contestant. *Grassroots Development* thanks everyone who contributed to the success of this competition. For more information on the IAF's Fellowships, visit www.iie.org/iaf.— P.D.



Dianne Lake

Volunteer Tourism and Mayan Weavers: Friendship, Friction and Fair Trade

By Rebecca Nelson

Tourism ranks just behind coffee as Guatemala's leading industry. In 2012, nearly 2 million international visitors entered the country and spent \$1.42 billion (Castañeda 2013). Increasingly, Western travelers want a closer connection to community life, which has prompted some to volunteer in Guatemalan clinics or cooperatives. To date, the literature on volunteer tourism, or "voluntourism," has focused

on the volunteers' motivations and how the experience affects them (e.g., Wearing 2001; Simpson 2004; Palacios 2010; Baillie Smith and Laurie 2011). This scholarly attention—which mirrors voluntourism's emphasis on the visitors' expectations and professional goals (McGehee et al. 2009)—tends to obscure how host communities understand their involvement. Wearing and Neil (2003:291) suggest that

research on voluntourism should explore the “micro-social dynamic exchanges” among the tourists, their host organizations and the surrounding community.

My work in Guatemala concentrated on such exchanges between members of a federation of weaving cooperatives and voluntourists as they negotiated the commodification of “Mayan culture” for the purpose of generating income for Mayan households. I argue that competition in the limited market catering to “ethical” consumers has led the voluntourists and the management of TelaMaya (a pseudonym) to push weavers to share intimate aspects of their lives and cultural heritage by submitting to intrusive visits, photography and interviews. TelaMaya comprises 17 cooperatives whose membership totals 400 weavers from five states in Guatemala’s Western Highlands: Sololá, Huehuetenango, Sacatepéquez, Quetzaltenango and Quiché. The Western Highlands, where up to 81 percent of the population falls below the general poverty line (INE 2011), has the lowest levels of education and literacy, wealth, housing, access to services, job satisfaction and health in the country (INE 2011). In this context, weaving presents a rare opportunity for women who otherwise work uncompensated in family gardens and milpas, or corn plots. Scholars consider weaving one of the most important “material bases of [indigenous] ethnic identity” in Guatemala (Smith 1988:230). Guatemalan textiles operate as symbolic “text,” communicating, in addition to ethnicity, the wearer’s geographic origin, gender, marital status, age and socioeconomic level (Schevil et al. 1991). Working with TelaMaya, women earn income for their families while affirming their indigenous identity.

TelaMaya helps the weavers market their textiles by operating a shop in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala’s second largest city, as well as exporting to retailers in the United States and Europe. Like many handicrafts enterprises, TelaMaya is not certified by an international fair-trade organization, but it participates in fair-trade markets catering to consumers willing to pay more for a product in exchange for some assurance that workers are compensated decently and treated well. Sales of textiles net TelaMaya some US\$31,250 in annual income. The amount an individual weaver receives depends on the success of her products. Whether her share turns out to be as little

as US\$6 or as much as US\$600, it represents a welcome infusion of cash that might pay for children’s shoes or a small luxury, such as instant coffee.

Founded in 1988 with aid from the Dutch government, TelaMaya became self-governing and financially independent in 1995. Today an elected board of Mayan directors manages daily operations. Five indigenous languages are represented in TelaMaya and many weavers do not speak Spanish. While the federation is nominally democratic, communication is relayed through Spanish-speakers from the various language groups, which might inhibit the weavers’ expression of concerns to the leadership and restrict their input into policy. In spite of this and other problems limiting feedback on practices that might cause discomfort, TelaMaya is the preferred outlet for most weavers in the member cooperatives, who also sell textiles to intermediaries in greater volume but at lower prices.

Given their precarious finances and dependency on TelaMaya, weavers invest some of their time attending to voluntourists in hope of improving the federation’s competitive edge. TelaMaya attracts approximately 50 international voluntourists a year, typically female university students from North America and Europe, who want to connect with people from another culture and gain professional experience in international development. Volunteers commonly spend one month at TelaMaya. Its officers, elected by the board of directors, want to host as many volunteers as possible and will ask those who are bilingual to interpret for those who do not speak Spanish. Voluntourists, who often come from the same communities as TelaMaya’s clients, bring linguistic and cultural knowledge that is unavailable locally, and they donate technical skills that the federation could not otherwise afford. They fill important roles, managing TelaMaya’s website, email and online sales; working with international wholesale clients; setting long-term goals for the organization; and determining how to represent it in advertising materials. Under the leadership of a designated coordinator, groups of voluntourists generate suggestions for new designs, outlets, contacts or fundraising, subject to approval by the officers.

Cooperative members, voluntourists and clients differ in their approaches to business and cultural patrimony, or what voluntourists might term intellec-



Juan Carlos "Jukar" Cardona

Weavers, Rebecca Nelson and the huipil she completed.

tual property. Anna Tsing (2005) uses "friction" as a metaphor to describe encounters between individuals from different cultures, disrupting more simplistic notions of globalization as unimpeded flows of people, products and ideas. Conceptualizing globalization this way helps resist easy characterization of the weaver-voluntourist interaction as "global hegemony" versus "local resistance," because both parties impose and contest the terms of the exchange. Values and expectations might diverge, when, for example, voluntourists introduce short-lived new systems based on their own notions of good business prac-

tices that are not embraced by the officers. But the tenor of the relationships in the volunteer program is caring: bonds of affection and mutual trust develop between cooperative members and voluntourists over the short time that they work together. Weavers often view foreign voluntourists as more altruistic than local volunteers or employees, and they welcome their assistance toward the success of the cooperative.

To achieve that success, TelaMaya's voluntourists believe their mission is to market the weavers' stories along with their textiles in the fair-trade market, which deals in images as well as commodities. As



Marisa Pettit

Weavers' shop in Quetzaltenango.

ethical consumers themselves, they know what information has appeal. Many authors (e.g., Hudson and Hudson 2003) claim that the ethical-consumption movement, including fair trade and alternative tourism, is working to “de-fetishize” or make transparent the conditions of production and commodification, to highlight that the process of consuming creates a relationship between producers and consumers. However, some authors (Cook and Crang 1996; Castree 2001; Goodman 2004; Lyon 2006) suggest

that by using identity to sell products and tourist experiences, ethical organizations are not so much revealing the conditions of production as exoticizing and “re-fetishizing” foreign locales. They claim that ethical consumption encourages consumers to locate themselves within a moral geography that emphasizes cultural distance, separating them from producers, in spite of the intention to bring the two groups together.

The effort to link products with images and stories of the specific women who made them is a

major source of friction between weavers and well-meaning voluntourists. During my ethnographic fieldwork, a U.S. volunteer who had worked at Whole Foods suggested a product tag with photographs, first names and a brief statement from each artist. “I think people would be a lot more interested in buying if they could see where it’s from and who’s making it,” a Canadian woman echoed. The weavers resisted. Later, they explained to me that many felt that their images could be used to exert power over them. “Even if it results in money for them, they do not want to [participate],” commented TelaMaya president Maria, who described the resistance in light of traditional beliefs. Some women keep the hair they lose in the walls of their adobe houses, she said, so that they always know where it is. “It is something that the ancestors left them,” she explained, adding that women report feeling a tugging on their heads when hair goes down the drain. While TelaMaya’s officers claimed to be “more civilized” and rejected the notion that hair or photographs pose a metaphysical danger, they respected such concerns. The officers were also wary that foreigners would sell pictures of the women without sharing the proceeds. “They are making money on the backs of the people,” vice-president Roxana said.

The online catalog compiled by voluntourists is another source of friction. Entries typically include the group who made the item, the village where it was made, the location of the village and the Mayan language spoken as well as the significance of symbols represented or traditional uses of the product. However, these entries sometimes contain errors. Voluntourists and clients frequently confuse the names of villages, but the idea that each design originated in a specific place seems to matter more than absolute accuracy of attribution. The mere association between a product and “a village in Guatemala” adds value. One wholesaler from Tennessee told me that, in the current global market, people want their products anchored to a place. TelaMaya’s clients often nostalgically contrast the specificity of Guatemalan weaving styles with the anonymity of mass-produced goods. While this is de-fetishizing in the sense that the geographic origin of a product is a reminder that another person’s labor created it, it makes the village a proxy for that unknown person. This further

highlights the unequal bargaining positions in the fair-trade market, which ultimately rests on the good will of the consumer (Bryant and Goodman 2004).

Volunteers have discovered that review by TelaMaya’s officers does not necessarily result in correction of the mistakes. In fact, the officers consider the exact location of the cooperatives proprietary information. TelaMaya does not charge dues; textiles are its main source of revenue. Having invested in making connections with international wholesale clients, the officers are concerned that the clients could work directly with the weavers if they could contact them personally. They also worry that other organizations might try to “poach” TelaMaya’s member cooperatives, as apparently happened when half the cooperative from the town of Chirijox defected to a competitor.

The weavers resist sharing information on designs, patterns or weaving techniques, out of apprehension that the tradition that is the basis of their livelihoods and identity could be appropriated by clients or voluntourists better positioned to take advantage of foreign markets. Like many indigenous Guatemalans, TelaMaya members have seen how the government has used their culture to promote tourism and nationalism while failing to provide them basic services, mitigate widespread discrimination or address the structural violence that keeps native peoples subordinated. Weavers in TelaMaya are concerned that voluntourists will similarly exploit Mayan designs and techniques for their own financial gain. A leader of a weaving group might refer to volunteers as the “pillar” of her organization, and, in the same breath, accuse them of taking knowledge of Mayan backstrap weaving home to sell.

Weavers want to sell in fair-trade markets and they take pride in their prestigious international clients who, they say, “value our Mayan culture.” They also want to protect their proprietary knowledge as both heritage and resource. Voluntourists bring TelaMaya technical skills, cross-cultural competency and an awareness of trends. The international network of former volunteers provides business contacts, donations in kind and support for fundraising campaigns. However, to extract the full benefit from this assistance, the weavers may have to share something that they do not want to give up. For them,



Merchandise display, Quetzaltenango.

Paul Chee

fair-trade marketing becomes more intrusive than marketing that lets producers remain invisible, just as alternative tourism can have a greater economic, cultural and environmental impact on communities than commercial tourism (Butler 2004; Macleod 2004), because it creates more intimate and longer-term relationships between the visitors and visited. The process of revealing and concealing information plays out daily as voluntourists help package ethnic identity along with products.

As voluntourists become increasingly essential to grassroots organizations such as TelaMaya, their interactions with their hosts can cause discomfort that highlights the complexities of humanitarian entrepreneurship. Dependence on foreign volunteers for desperately needed skills should be a significant concern for the leaders of TelaMaya, who, to date, have used interpersonal skills to maintain control of the voluntourists they have come to consider a renewable resource. They will need to strengthen their federation and improve communication with the weavers if they want to take advantage of volunteer expertise and accommodate volunteer expectations without losing sight of their members' needs.

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Photos courtesy Jelena Radovic Fanta

Vineyard in the Aconcagua Valley, central Chile.

Seasons and Uncertainty: *Temporeras* in Chile's Fruit Industry

By Jelena Radovic Fanta

"The country grows with exports, but the *temporera* stays the same," Javiera said as we conversed one late afternoon in June 2009 in San Felipe, Chile. As a *temporera*, or seasonal worker, she is one of roughly 400,000 women employed during the austral summer to harvest or pack fruit destined for markets around the world. Research for my dissertation during 2009 and 2010 took me to the Aconcagua Valley of central Chile where I examined how *temporeras* negotiate a precarious labor regime. Between January and early April of 2009, I worked in vineyards and packing plants, engaging in observation during the day and

conducting open-ended interviews in fields, plants and homes after hours. Drawing upon workers' narratives, I explored the effects of neoliberal policies on everyday life. By "neoliberal," I am referring to "political economic practices that propose that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms" (Harvey 2005: 2).

A workforce is born

Chile's internationally lauded fruit-export industry developed in the late 1970s, propelled by the neoliberal policies adopted under Gen. Augusto Pinochet,

whose regime endured from 1973 to 1990 (Caro and de la Cruz 2004, Falabella 1991, Tinsman 2004). Table grapes grown during the Chilean counter-season found their way into the niche left open in northern markets during the winter. They were followed by avocados, kiwis, citrus fruits and cherries harvested from April to October, which extended the export cycle. “By 1987 Chile’s international fruit sales amounted to almost half a billion dollars and the *Wall Street Journal* hailed the fruit industry as proof of Chile’s economic miracle” (Winn 2000: 262). With the boom a seasonal workforce was born, 75 percent of it comprised of rural women. Initially drawn by the opportunity to “help out” at home, they became wage earners for the first time in their lives. Today the industry is their steadiest source of income (Tinsman 2004, Valdés 1998).

Research reveals how household relations shifted as a result of women’s seasonal employment (Barrientos et al 1999, Caro and de la Cruz 2004, Falabella 1991, Tinsman 2004, Valdés 2007). The expansion of the fruit industry coincided with a nationwide recession that caused men’s employment to plummet, and Chilean women increasingly left the domestic sphere to provide for their families. Instead of asking their husbands for money, *temporeras* allocated their own income to food, clothes, medicine and household items as well as cosmetics, toiletries and leisure with friends (Tinsman 2004: 271). Consumption became a vehicle for challenging patriarchy and creating community among women who shared stories about children, shopping and sex (Tinsman 2006). Men frequently felt that their wives were “abandoning” family obligations and them. “Women fruit workers *did* spend more time with one another and enjoyed it,” but working 12 to 14 hours a day during the summer also meant sacrifice (Tinsman 2004: 273). “You leave aside the household, the children,” Isidora said of the cost.

The Chilean fruit boom came to rely on the rural women absorbed every summer into the work force. The conditions in which the *temporeras* have toiled—including workweeks that frequently exceed the legal limit of 45 hours, inadequate protective equipment and exposure to pesticides—have been the downside of their employment and of the industry’s success. While fruit has been a driver of robust economic

growth, Chile’s glaring disparity in income distribution is the highest of the 34 nations that are members of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (Collins and Lear 1995, OECD 2010, Winn 2004). Chileans in the top tenth percentile with respect to income earn 27 times as much as those in the lowest tenth, where most *temporeras* fall, their earnings from the grape harvest often offset by under- and unemployment during the remainder of the year (CASEN 2011).

Uncertainty in the workplace

Unemployment spikes during the winter, exactly when heating and cold-weather ailments elevate the cost of living. The luckier *temporeras* find work in plants that operate year round processing grapes and then lesser quantities of avocados, kiwis, citrus and cherries. Others bounce from job to job as domestic workers, street vendors, cashiers or waitresses.

Even in summer, uncertainty permeates their employment. In packing plants, work can end between midnight and 4:00 am. “We know what time we start but never what time we will finish,” Carmen said. *Temporeras* are paid per box of fruit picked, packed or processed, which growers argue boosts productivity. Speed is the most important variable in take-home pay, with each woman working as fast as she can. The fastest can earn up to twice the minimum wage. The pace is hard on the body, but aches and pains go ignored until the end of the summer, so that no workday is lost.

Temporeras often cannot identify their employer. “You don’t know for whom you’re working,” Marina observed late one night as we packed freshly picked grapes into cardboard boxes. Her cap was embroidered with “Doña Luisa,” the plant preparing the grapes for export; the crates in which they had arrived were stamped “Corpex,” the name of the grower; the trucks in the driveway belonged to Aconcagua Export. Increasingly the industry has relied on subcontractors to hire *temporeras*, which has given rise to abuse. This includes the failure to deposit payroll deductions into government-sponsored health insurance or pension funds, often discovered after the subcontractors have disappeared, along with the money. Legislation enacted in 2006 requires subcontractors to register and makes the

contractor responsible for a subcontractor's delinquencies. But subcontractors can evade the registry and, while *temporeras* have learned to monitor deductions, many are still unaware of the contractor's liability and their right to recourse.

Flexibility in the industry

A legacy of the Pinochet era in contemporary Chile is the concept of "labor flexibility," really a complex of laws and practices that enable corporations to adjust rapidly to fluctuations in production and the market by allowing them to "subcontract, hire, or lay off workers, [and] carry out changes in the personnel whenever convenient," (Arteaga 2000: 45). The consequences for the worker are "lower wages, increasing job insecurity, and loss of job benefits and of job protections," all of which contribute to deepen inequality (Harvey 2005: 75-76, Amuedo-Dorantes 2005).

Chilean labor contracts are consistent with laws regulating wages and hours, grounds for dismissal, compensation for work-related injuries and participation in government-funded benefits, including health insurance. During Chile's transition to democracy in the early 1990s, when less than a third of *temporeras* had formalized the terms and conditions of their employment with any kind of written agreement (personal communication with Pamela Caro, September 2009), many organized to demand contracts. By 2000, according to the *Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional* [The National Socioeconomic Characterization Survey], 48.6 percent of *temporeras* were employed for the summer under a contract (Caro 2003). Increasingly, however, while the terms and conditions adhere to the letter of the law, they also reflect the push for labor flexibility.

Today, the contracts that *temporeras* sign usually limit their employment to the few weeks it takes to process a single variety of a specific fruit. Grapes, for example, include Thompson Seedless, Flame, Red Globe, Crimson and Autumn Royal, whose harvests are staggered throughout the summer: Flame, in January; Crimson in February; Autumn Royal in March, for example. Between January and mid-April, *temporeras* who pick, clean and pack table grapes might enter into five contracts with the same company. Sometimes a *temporera* is hired under a new contract the day after the previous contract ended. She

can also be jobless pending the arrival of the next variety to be processed. "I'm telling you quite honestly, I feel unprotected," Julieta described the arrangement.

I asked a general manager why his company preferred multiple short contracts to a single contract for the entire grape season. "Let's say I hire 50 women to process grapes," he explained. "Two turn out to be lazy or conflictive. Instead of being stuck with them for three months, I lay them off when the variety ends. If they go to the Work Inspection to report the company for wrongful termination, I have the contract that they signed, and we are not fined." The Work Inspection is a branch of the Chilean Ministry of Labor that oversees compliance with labor laws, and it is frequently understaffed and underfunded. Its inspectors visit workplaces in response to complaints. Managers are usually on notice and can prepare by bringing safety measures, tools, time and attendance records, and bathrooms into compliance. In my experience, this never extended beyond the inspection.

Working under contract to larger companies does offer advantages. Agribusinesses that hire many employees are subject to closer scrutiny. They tend to maintain contracts in order and keep up with the payroll deductions that Chilean workers contribute to *AFP Capital*, which provides retirement benefits, and to the *Fondo Nacional de Salud* (FONASA), which provides health insurance. *Temporeras* whose payroll deductions have been properly channeled can qualify for an eventual pension and for *Afiliación Extendida*, a program that extends health insurance through the entire year—if they can document four months of work as contract labor or 60 days as day labor. Either period can be cobbled together from multiple summer contracts and proof of odd jobs during the winter. For the nearly 52 percent of *temporeras* who do not work under contract, documenting employment is more difficult, if not impossible.

Safety and the worker

Flexibility transfers to *temporeras* the burden of keeping the workplace safe. In July 2009, a commotion erupted in a major packing plant when Karla, a *temporera*, caught her hand in the conveyor belt that sorted avocados. By the time the machine was turned off, Karla had to be taken to a nearby clinic. "The [management] treated her very badly, blaming her

for, almost insinuating that she did it on purpose,” said Viviana, a co-worker who witnessed the event. “In the end, the worker is responsible for prevention. Everything that happens is our fault. If our hand gets caught, we weren’t paying attention.”

Chile’s national health insurance covers treatment of contract workers injured on the job. Workers who are not under contract are not on the insurance rolls and are ineligible for government-funded treatment and compensation for work-related injuries. An uninsured worker injured on the job goes to the closest emergency room and avoids implicating the company, hoping to keep open the option of returning to work. I encountered *temporeras*, mainly in smaller plants that are less likely to be inspected, who had opted to take their chances and refused a contract in an effort to avoid deductions for benefits that reduce take-home pay. Like delaying a visit to the doctor until the harvest is over, this choice is rooted in the uncertainty as to how they will earn their living once summer ends (Nguyen and Peschard 2003). Not surprisingly, some women regret the decision.

In compliance with labor regulations, most packing plants exhibit posters advising employees to use

tools correctly and wear appropriate clothing, including masks and gloves. Employers are required by law to purchase and distribute protective equipment, but actual practice varies. If accidents occur often enough on site, businesses are subject to fines and mandatory inspections. They might also be ordered to halt production for a few hours while employees attend workshops. These often convey the “individual moral responsibilities” that employees must assume to avoid accidents (Clarke et al 2010) even though they have no control over conditions in the workplace. *Temporeras* do what they can, checking the floor for stray fruit that could cause a slip-and-fall incident, holding their breath while they fumigate boxes of grapes with the gas that prolongs shelf life and otherwise attempting to fill the gap between laws aimed at risk reduction and their actual enforcement (Rose 1999).

Organizing

Chilean trade unions were completely dismantled under Pinochet’s rule. With the exception of the above-referenced push for contracts during the 1990s, *temporeras* have very low levels of organizing (Arteaga 2000, Caro and de la Cruz 2004, Falabella 1991,





Tinsman 2004, Valdés 1998). Legally, seasonal laborers in the fruit industry can form a union but they are prohibited from engaging in collective bargaining, a primary purpose of organizing (Caro and de la Cruz 2004). Furthermore, the structure of their employment impedes cohesion. *Temporeras* usually work together no more than four months out of the year; the hours are long and intense; women go home to family obligations, including childcare.

An important deterrent to organizing is fear of losing one's job. "We know exactly what's going on," Soledad told me over lunch, "but we just can't afford not to take money home" Tatiana described what happened when a group of workers struck for higher pay. "You don't like it? Whoever wants to can leave right now," the owners said. "The bus is outside. There are dozens of people waiting for your job." When an employer yields to the demand for better pay, the triumph lasts through the season. The next year, however, the employer can revert to the earlier rate or pay even less, as happened in 2009, allegedly because of "the crisis," the global recession of 2008.

What remains?

If today *temporeras* are not mobilizing, they are clearly aware of how their work conditions affect

their lives. I argue that the most vulnerable employees are subsidizing the fruit industry by working long hours, neglecting family and sacrificing well-being as they incur gaps in government-sponsored benefits. Are the rewards of their labor limited to consumer items purchased with meager earnings—a washing machine, a microwave, new bedding?

Most *temporeras* that I interviewed recognize that their investment in future generations provides emotional fulfillment and creates possibility. "What I do now is for my children, so they don't have to be *temporeras*," is a frequent refrain. This only reinforces the fact that their welfare depends on themselves, not the interest of the public and private sectors in improving conditions. In an era when labor rights have become weakened and employers aggressively advocate for flexibility, it is imperative to examine the effect on the citizens struggling in the shadow of "development." While the fruit sector has been hailed in Chile and abroad as "modern" (personal communications with owners Ribenetti and Schuetz) due to its export niche, the investment it attracts and its highly technical infrastructure, its invisibilized labor force navigates insecurity and unrealistic expectations (Collins and Lear 1995, Winn 2000), reconfiguring notions of what it means to be a worker

and head of household in a seasonal cycle. *Temporeras* supporting families are often dignified by their status as the primary provider. Everyday working conditions, however, inhibit long-term planning and the next harvest becomes the only certainty.

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Patrick Breslin

To Lake Titicaca and Back Again: Reflections on a Calling

By Kevin Healy

With 36 years of service logged when he retired in April, Kevin Healy holds the record as the longest-serving employee of the Inter-American Foundation. The following is excerpted from Healy's remarks during the IAF's celebration of his long and productive career just before his departure.

My commitment to Latin America began with a service project staffed by undergraduate volunteers and organized on the Peruvian shores of Lake Titicaca by the University of Notre Dame. A year later, I returned to the world's highest navigable lake as a Peace Corps volunteer and discovered Taquile Island, the only community on the shore whose residents still weave and wear traditional dress. I was able to help them introduce their superb Andean textiles, the finest on the lake at that time, to the tourist market. As a new IAF representative, I funded a grant that helped taquileños purchase motors, adapted from trucks, that enabled them to ferry tourists in their boats and to develop

an economy based on home-stays and their cultural patrimony. Taquile has since evolved from one of the poorest communities in the lake area to one of the better-off and a world-class visitor attraction.

My first IAF sighting was in 1971, when I visited the office of the United States Agency for International Development in Asunción. Light bulbs flashed as I read a document detailing a brand-new U.S. foreign-assistance agency that seemed a mirror opposite of the disappointing face of official aid—an approach that was channeling U.S. taxpayer dollars into the coffers of a corrupt regime. That military dictatorship, which became the longest-ruling in the

hemisphere, had little interest in the conditions of the impoverished majority of Paraguayans, and its iron fist was pummeling pro-democracy activists in the Catholic University where I was on the team from Georgetown University providing Jesuit-to-Jesuit support for programs in the social sciences. In that dreadful scenario of government-to-government aid, the IAF concept sparked hope that civil society could be the conduit for more productive assistance.

Three years later, as a Ph.D. candidate at Cornell University, I received an IAF Fellowship funding field work for my dissertation in rural Paraguay. At the time, the IAF required its Fellows be sponsored by an IAF grantee and the few in Paraguay were unwilling to be my sponsor. I thought that my relationship with the IAF would end on that note. But Jim Obrien, a former Maryknoll missionary and proactive IAF leader, recognized that my research could be conducted in Bolivia. He approached the late Claudio Pou, a Spanish Jesuit with an American Ph.D., who was assisting a regional network of IAF grantees. Padre Claudio readily grasped how well my research

suited conditions in southern Chuquisaca department, where an IAF grantee agreed to sponsor me.

While I was writing my dissertation in Ithaca, Obrien invited me to share my research with IAF staff, which led to my successful application to fill the position for Bolivia. I reported for work in January 1978. The IAF's congressional mandate was driven by its first president, the charismatic and visionary Bill Dyal, a former Baptist missionary who had roomed in the seminary with fellow Texan Bill Moyers and came to the IAF via the Peace Corps. Dyal would lead the agency for nine years, setting a record in the position. Something of a maverick among senior federal officials, he reported to work in jeans long before anyone had heard of casual Friday and he was the first head of a U.S. government foreign assistance agency to elevate a woman to the rank of vice president. Whether in congressional hearings or in Andean potato fields, Dyal inspired confidence when he spoke about change from the grassroots. The staff he recruited counted former missionaries; community organizers, U.S.



Courtesy Kevin Healy

Peace Corps volunteer Healy in 1969 with taquileños.



Patrick Breslin

Healy with Guillermo Flores from Candelaria in Chuquisaca, Bolivia.

and foreign; Peace Corps alumni; and other freshly-minted Ph.Ds. in the social sciences.

It was a heady environment and, for me, those were golden days. The IAF stood tall amidst terrible repression, often perpetrated by military dictatorships. O'Brien developed a remarkable strategy for funding the heroic human-rights community in Chile, led during those dark times by the Catholic Church. The regime of General Augusto Pinochet reacted by trying to derail the resources that the IAF receives from the Social Progress Trust Fund (SPTF), consisting of repayments on loans extended to Latin American governments under the Alliance for Progress. Working pro-bono behind the scenes, Tom Scanlon, of Benchmarks, Inc., and Father Ted Hesburgh, then-president of Notre Dame, our alma mater, foiled that attempt to cut off SPTF funding for the IAF's program in Chile and also secured future IAF grants throughout the hemisphere.

I began funding organizations in Bolivia just as the rule of Hugo Banzer, the country's most dura-

ble military dictator, was beginning to crumble. Pressured by a massive grassroots hunger strike and the human rights policies of President Jimmy Carter, Banzer himself called for elections. With civil society energized, proposals poured into my office. My credibility got a boost in 1981 with the publication of my dissertation in Bolivia as *Caciques y Patronos, Una Experiencia de Desarrollo Rural en el Sur de Bolivia*. Later I acquired the portfolios for Ecuador, Peru, Panama, Honduras and Colombia, sometimes in tandem with the Bolivia program, but for the last three years I concentrated almost exclusively on Bolivia. My approach aimed to engage multiple sectors and organizations, further cultural and ecological diversity, consider contextual changes and give the IAF a presence in every Bolivian region. Whether funding involved recovering traditional Andean crops and livestock, agro-forestry in the Amazon, water conservation, or revitalizing music and dance, textile production and bilingual

education, the goal was always socio-economic development in low-income communities. Some grantees became game-changers, pioneering initiatives that were replicated or expanded.

Bill Dyal's emphasis on "learning and dissemination" led many to share our IAF experience. My bent for writing is genetic, traceable to my father, a professional journalist in Washington. Under Peter Bell, Dyal's immediate successor, "learning and dissemination" became an ambitious undertaking. As head of the Ford Foundation in Brazil and Chile, Bell had led its support for social science research that elucidated development issues, and he hit the ground running at the IAF. The committee that selected Ph.D. and M.A. candidates as well as social entrepreneurs for IAF Fellowships was a veritable *Who's Who* drawn from U.S. and Latin American academia. Bell hired editors Sheldon Anis and Ron Weber to transform a modest in-house publication into a journal conforming to the highest standards for professional writing and photography. With a more sophisticated format, *Grassroots Development* attracted new writers and more readers to their case studies of grassroots processes as they unfolded and profiles of dynamic social entrepreneurship.

Bell enlisted economist Albert Hirschman to compile his observations of the IAF and its grantees into a report that became the book *Getting Ahead Collectively*, a seal of approval carrying important legitimacy. Although not assigned to work with Hirschman, I benefitted from the next best thing: an opportunity to work with his favorite student, Judith Tendler, a rising star at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. At the request of Peter Hakim, Bell's able vice-president, also from the Ford Foundation, I identified a research project for her in Bolivia. Tendler's resulting study of rural cooperatives became a development classic with a long shelf life. Her thoughts on development and the role of foreign aid made waves, including with me.

Controversy and media coverage swirled when Peter Bell left abruptly, followed later by Hakim. Excellent years followed, however, when Deborah Szekely took the helm, wisely guiding the IAF out of the crisis with the able assistance of IAF veterans Charlie Reilly and Steve Vetter, who became her vice presidents. Meanwhile Hakim became

president of the Inter-American Dialogue and Bell chaired its board. During the 1980s, in fact, the IAF seemed like an incubator for talented visionaries who ascended to leadership across the universe of international development and philanthropy—Bell, chair of the board and then president of Care International; Hakim, president of the Inter-American Dialogue; Michael Shifter, Hakim's successor at the Dialogue; Ray Offenheiser, president of Oxfam America; Josh Reichert, vice president of the Pew Charitable Trust; Carol Michaels, vice president of Winrock International; Brad Smith, vice-president at Ford and president of two other foundations; Steve Vetter, president of Partners of the Americas. Doug and Steve Hellinger rocked the international development policy boat in Washington for many years via the Development Gap that they founded and led.

"Learning and dissemination" led me beyond the IAF, including to the Andean Seminar at George Washington University, a lively forum for debating policy and for sharing observations; and to the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) for outside-the-box perspectives on U.S. policy. The multilateral banks also offered opportunities to share my take on grassroots development, notably with Sheldon Davis, the activist-anthropologist who became a kind of conscience at the World Bank, providing ideas and critiques of entrenched policies and infusing new staff to correct them. At the Foreign Service Institute, which prepares U.S. diplomats for overseas assignments, I frequently lecture on critical issues based on my experience with civil society, and on perspectives from the grassroots not well-known inside the Beltway. Speaking engagements took me to Harvard, Princeton, Cornell, Duke, Michigan State, Arizona and other campuses and, frequently, to the Congress of the Latin American Studies Association. Most memorably, as one of three guests each speaking on a different continent at the annual dinner of the Society for International Development (SID) in the 1990s, I chronicled step-by-step the historic and successful 34-day march by Amazonian Bolivians to secure their homelands from external threats.

I am especially pleased to have played a role in the IAF's support for the colorful traditions



Artecampo exhibit, National Museum of the American Indian.

Mark Caicedo

on display here in Washington. “Culture and Development,” a program that I co-curated with Olivia Cadaval of the Smithsonian at the National Festival of American Folklife in 1994, brought 100 representatives from 16 organizations to the National Mall to share their heritage and grassroots initiatives, including via an exhibit of Andean weaving at the Sackler Museum nearby. As part of the 2013 Festival, Bolivian musicians from the Centro Cultural Masis, whose school had benefited from IAF support in the 1980s, performed to a packed house at the Kennedy Center and for crowds at the Smithsonian. In 2004, the National Museum of the American Indian

(NMAI) welcomed representatives of Bolivian and Peruvian IAF grantees to its inaugural extravaganza. Later, visitors to the NMAI celebrated Valentine’s Day with Kuna craftswomen from Panama and farmers from former grantee El Ceibo, Bolivia’s largest chocolate enterprise, owned and operated by the cacao growers. No doubt the IAF’s finest moment at NMAI was in 2010 when the year-long commemoration of our 40th anniversary ended with a spectacular showcase of 2,000 crafts by artists representing the diverse ethnicities and traditions of the Santa Cruz region in Bolivia’s tropical lowlands. The event attracted huge crowds and earned more than \$80,000 for

Artecampo, a federation of 1,300 indigenous embroiders, potters, weavers and sculptors that partners with IAF grantee Centro de Investigación, Diseño y Comercialización Comunitaria (CIDAC).

I cannot leave out of this story on “learning and dissemination” my involvement in the early 1990s with public television affiliate WGBH, whose award-winning, three-hour documentary “Local Heroes, Global Change,” included a 15-minute segment on the former IAF Bolivian grantee CCIMCA on behalf of women in *altiplano* communities. In my book *Llamas Weaving and Organic Chocolate, Multicultural Grassroots Development in the Andes and Amazon of Bolivia* (Notre Dame: 2001), compiling my experiences in Bolivia, I tried to capture social processes and share the stories, struggles and lessons of the grassroots movers and shakers who made a difference in their communities and the world. Institutions in the U.S. and Europe using the book include the School of International Training in Vermont, which, for more than a decade, has assigned it to students spending their semester abroad in Bolivia. A Spanish version is expected by the end of 2014. The manuscript not only absorbed

me for years but led me to develop a graduate course on indigenous social movements in Latin America, which launched my teaching career at George Washington and at Georgetown University. For 14 years, the office-classroom balance act was a challenge involving countless working weekends. I hope my students benefited from the exposure to the IAF’s approach, my knowledge of Latin America and my passion for my work.

I am biased and this has been said before: The U.S. government receives a good return per dollar invested in the IAF. I awarded my final IAF grant to a professional group working near Lake Titicaca to help entrepreneurial Aymara women offer products and services to tourists who overlook their communities en route to better-known destinations—recalling the efforts of the *taquileños* who captured a clientele that had once bypassed them. Without planning to end my career where it began, I came full circle, once again treading those sacred waters high in the Andes. I am honored to have worked with everyone who has been part of my IAF experience and thank you for teaching me so much. Together we made a difference.



Courtesy Kevin Healy

Healy and representatives of his final grantee, Centro de Investigaciones de Energía y Población (CIEP), in Batallas, Bolivia, where residents will develop services for visitors to Lake Titicaca.



Bottom-Up Development in the Classroom

By Robert Maguire

"From William Easterly (The Tyranny of Experts) to Dambisa Moyo (Dead Aid), and from Jeffrey Sachs (The End of Poverty) to Paul Collier (The Bottom Billion), development thinkers have expressed frustration with policies, programs, strategies, outcomes and institutions charged with alleviating poverty. Some have alluded to the need to focus additional resources on or reformed actions toward populations at the 'bottom.' This graduate seminar takes these analyses, frustrations and unsatisfactory results as a starting point to delve into prospects for more effective poverty alleviation through the application of 'bottom-up' approaches."

The Syllabus

That quote is from the syllabus introducing the course Poverty Alleviation and Bottom-Up Development, which I teach at the Elliott School of International Affairs of George Washington University as part of the two-year program, created in 1992, leading to a

master's degree in International Development Studies. Similar programs have emerged around the United States over the past 10 years or so, but development studies remains largely a subset of international affairs or economics departments, where courses tend to focus on approaches to development espoused by large multilateral and bilateral institutions. A bottom-up focus remains an underdeveloped element.

First offered at GW in 2011, "Pov Alev & BUD" is now taught there twice a year to packed classrooms. Before it zooms in on "bottom-up" solutions, the course considers approaches that actually exacerbated poverty, at least for those living it, and "silver bullets" that direct the benefits of donor funding to those other than the poor. Most students entering my class have had some exposure to development and are looking to parlay their studies into a deeper involvement. Some have had a grassroots experience overseas, usually as a volunteer with the Peace

Corps or with a community-based or nongovernmental organization. Others want to complement their study of more traditional, top-down aid. Many are relatively new to development, having worked as an intern or held an entry-level position in an international financial institution, nongovernmental organization or for-profit development company such as, respectively, the World Bank, the Pan American Development Foundation or Chemonics, and are already expressing frustration similar to that of the seasoned writers cited above.

The IAF in the classroom

As one might suspect from a professor who cut his development teeth as an Inter-American Foundation representative, the IAF experience figures prominently in the configuration of “Pov Alev & BUD” and its lessons filter into the classroom. The first class begins with a reading of “The Development Set,” a poem written in 1978 by Ross Coggins, an IAF regional director. Subsequent discussions center on articles published by IAF staff in *Grassroots Development* that underscore how the grassroots approach is frequently overlooked: “What Big Development Thinkers Ignore” by David Bray (2009: Vol. 30/1); “What Sachs Lacks” by Patrick Breslin (2007: Vol. 28/1); and “A Grassroots View of Development Assistance” by Ramón Daubón (2002: Vol. 23/1). Chapters from Breslin’s book *Development and Dignity: Grassroots Development and the Inter-American Foundation* (1987) introduce the IAF.

Sprinkled across the syllabus are excerpts from publications inspired by the work of the IAF, including *Direct to the Poor, Grassroots Development in Latin America* (1988: Lynne Rienner) by Sheldon Annis and Peter Hakim, also of IAF’s staff, and from *Getting Ahead Collectively* (1984: Pergamon Press) that renowned economist Albert Hirschman based on his fieldwork among IAF grantees. Hirschman’s treatise on the “mutation of social energy” always merits special consideration. *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid* (2012: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects), a book in which former IAF representative Chuck Kleymeyer was instrumental, is incorporated into the seminar. Exposure to the IAF’s work is not limited to readings. Doug Hellinger, a former IAF intern and founding

member of the Development Group for Alternative Policies (GAP), explains his organization’s efforts to encourage bilateral and multilateral organizations, particularly the World Bank, to listen and respond to the voices of the organized poor.

Current IAF representatives Seth Jesse and Jenny Petrow have shared wisdom from their experience on the ground with the portfolios for El Salvador and Haiti. Their elaboration of the IAF’s use of the Grassroots Development Framework to evaluate the returns on its investment quells some students’ concern that a bottom-up approach yields results that are difficult to measure. Interest in this issue is related to the growing emphasis on quantifiable data as indicative of effectiveness. The demand for metrics has yielded a host of job possibilities in monitoring and evaluation for students looking to get a foothold in the development profession. Seth and Jenny also lead a simulated review of proposals for funding submitted by grassroots groups that teaches how bottom-up support “works.” It also gets students ready for a major assignment analyzing a proposal in preparation for a hypothetical site visit. The materials used represent localized approaches to some of the solutions,



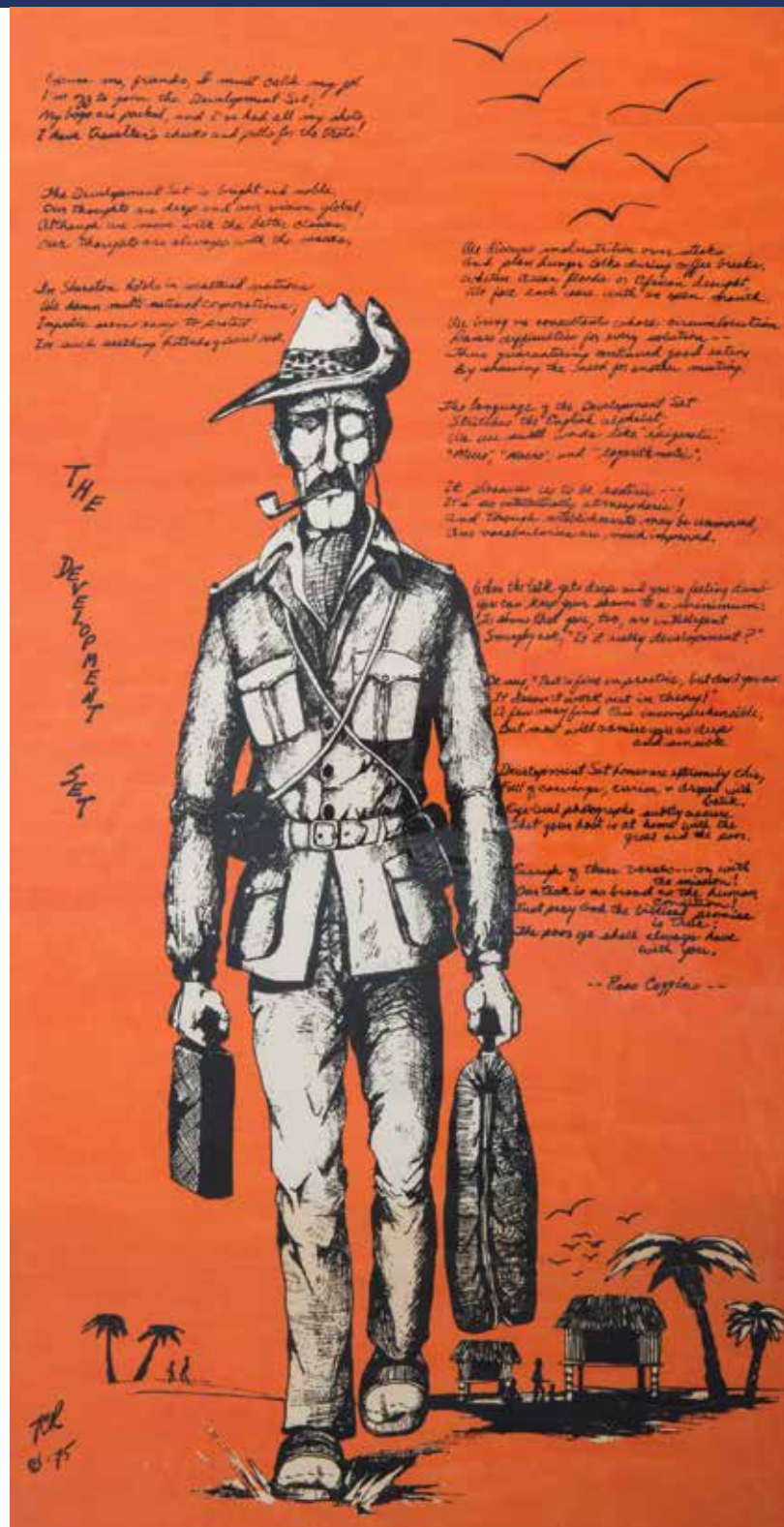
already explored in class, that often improve the prospects of the organized poor: microfinancing for women's enterprises; credit toward more productive farms; and a start-up cash transfer program similar to Brazil's *Bolsa Familia*.

The Final Exam

According to the final class reading assignment, "Towards the End of Poverty," taken from *The Economist* of June 1, 2013, "the world has lately been making extraordinary progress in lifting people out of extreme poverty" in view of the decrease in the ranks of the extremely poor in developing countries by almost 1 billion individuals between 1990 and 2010. The authors envisioned a further dramatic reduction by 2030 to "as near to zero as is realistically possible." *The Economist's* analysis of the future will come about, I posit, only through the effective application of the bottom-up approaches studied in "Pov Alev & BUD," throughout the semester.

At the end of the fall 2013 iteration of "Pov Alev & BUD," I asked my students to think about the article and incorporate the course content over the semester into an op-ed piece: "Putting Poverty in a Museum: Bottom-Up Perspectives." The title is drawn from the closing chapter of *Creating a World without Poverty* by Muhammad Yunus (Public Affairs: New York, 2007), founder of the Grameen Bank and a 2006 Nobel laureate. In it, he proposes that each nation choose a target date for building a museum dedicated to poverty that displays "its horrors to future generations" who will "wonder why poverty continued so long in human society—how a few people could live in luxury while billions dwelt in misery, deprivation and despair" (223). Challenging his own proposal, Yunus asks, "Can we really have poverty in... museums?" and answers, "Why not? We have the technology. We have the resources. All we need is the will to do it and to put the necessary institutions and policies in place.... Let's dedicate ourselves to bringing an end to it at the earliest possible date, and putting poverty in the museums once and for all" (233).

In view of Yunus' aspirations and the assertions in *The Economist*, perhaps the current name of my course is too modest. Maybe I should change it to "Poverty Elimination and Bottom-Up Development." Allow me a slight diversion at this point. Yunus



Ross Coggins (1928-2011) worked at the IAF in the late 1970s as regional director for Central America and special assistant to the president. His satirical poem became an instant hit and a development legend, thanks to this widely distributed poster.

The Development Set

By Ross Coggins

Excuse me, friends, I must catch my jet—
I'm off to join the development set;
My bags are packed, and I've had all my shots,
I have traveler's checks and pills for the trots.

The development set is bright and noble,
Our thoughts are deep and our vision global.
Although we move with the better classes,
Our thoughts are always with the masses.

In Sheraton hotels in scattered nations
We damn multinational corporations.
Injustice seems easy to protest
In such seething hotbeds of social rest.

We discuss malnutrition over steaks
And plan hunger talks during coffee breaks.
Whether Asian floods or African drought,
We face each issue with an open mouth.

We bring in consultants whose circumlocution
Raises difficulties for every solution—
Thus guaranteeing continued good eating
By showing the need for another meeting!

Though it's said that consultants believe it
now crime
To borrow your watch to tell you the time,
Their expenses are more than justified
When one thinks of the jobs they might later
provide.

The language of the Development Set
Stretches the English alphabet.
We use swell words like "epigenetic,"
"Micro," "macro" and "logarithmic."

It pleases us to be so esoteric—
It's so intellectually atmospheric!
And though establishments may be unmoved,
Our vocabularies are much improved.

When the talk gets deep and you're feeling
dumb
You can keep your shame to a minimum:
To show that you, too, are intelligent
Smugly ask, "Is it really development?"

Or say, "That's fine in practice, but don't you
see:
It doesn't work out in theory!"
A few may find this incomprehensible,
But most will admire you as deep and sensible.

Development Set homes are extremely chic
Full of carvings, curios and draped with batik.
Eye-level photographs subtly assure
That you host is at home with the great and
the poor.

Enough of these verses—on with the mission!
Our task is as broad as the human condition!
Just pray God the biblical promise is true:
The poor ye shall always have with you.

*"The Development Set" is reprinted here with the kind
permission of Ross Coggins' family.*

defines his poverty benchmark as “an income equivalent to one dollar a day or less” (19). For the authors of the reading from *The Economist*, “extreme poverty” is benchmarked at \$1.25 a day or less and the lives of people below that line are “nasty, brutish and short” (p. 11). I leave to another day a debate as to whether reaching the threshold of \$1.26 would transform

their lives into something that much better. So perhaps the title of my course is safe, at least for now.

The op-eds turned in by these budding development professionals at end of the seminar reflected how their initial curiosity had evolved into an understanding of the bottom-up approach. I found the pieces a joy to read and testament to the applica-

Putting Poverty in a Museum

By Meleah Paull



Muhammad Yunus may not be a household word or as recognizable as a rock star, but he has created a name for himself that is unparalleled in development. His work at the Grameen Bank has been widely studied, replicated, praised and criticized. His popular-

ization of the idea that small loans to poor people could unleash a tidal wave of entrepreneurial potential spoke to those hungry for solutions to poverty, preferably simple ones that could be brought to scale quickly. Yunus himself and the broader concept of microfinance embody a hopefulness that many find comforting. In this context, he issued his call to eliminate poverty and put it in a museum. As detailed in *The Economist*, the number of people living in poverty has dropped from 43 percent to 21 percent in the past two decades and although the same drastic reduction will be more difficult to achieve in the next 20 years, it may be attainable.

Yunus is certainly not the first to propose such a revolution. In fact, since the first stirrings of what became known as “development” in the latter half of the 20th century, theorists and practitioners have puzzled over how to make this happen. Some used

randomized controlled trials to seek the magic elixir that would produce the desired result. Others followed their gut or relied on anecdotal evidence. Was education the great engine of growth? Better health? Employment? Some of these, none of these? All of these at once? Programs that yielded robust empirical results, such as cash transfers, were scrutinized for political viability and their impact on accountability. It seemed an intractable maze.

During all of this pondering and hand-wringing, the intended beneficiaries were almost never asked to comment or participate. The dominant mode of operation began with a plan formulated by experts that emanated in a straight line from top to bottom. After repeatedly failing to demonstrate measurable success, and even causing harm in some cases, this paradigm began to give way at the margins. Books like *Portfolios of the Poor* documented that poor people constantly manage their money and are not frivolous or unsophisticated in their spending as some had feared. Organizations like The Development GAP agitated within the multilateral system for incremental change toward economic justice. The Inter-American Foundation proved that critically reflecting on the role of the funder, as well as listening to communities in need, could yield proposals that suited the context and produced consistently better outcomes. Aside from a purely technical or numbers-based concern for growth, these approaches also suggested a funda-

tion of an analysis that confirms the importance of listening and responding to grassroots voices. The piece written by Meleah Paull reinforces the importance of embracing a bottom-up perspective toward poverty alleviation as well as the value of bringing to the graduate classroom the lessons from the Inter American Foundation's grassroots approach.

Robert Maguire served as IAF representative for Haiti and the Caribbean from 1979 to 1999. Among his publications is Bottom-Up Development in Haiti (Inter-American Foundation: 1981).

mental shift in the relationships. Rather than donors and recipients, they envisioned partners who treated each other with respect. Yet these alternatives remain exceptions to the rule.

Muhammad Yunus argues that poverty “is not natural to human beings—it is artificially imposed on them.” I agree that poverty is a social construct, but that does not make it artificial. The process of creating poverty is purposeful, relational and interconnected. Despite the benefits of asking those closest to the problem to help identify solutions, development continues to function largely as an industry jealous of its competitors. Notwithstanding the moral imperative to treat poor people as experts in their own right, the belief persists that “we know best.” Protest from the Global South and criticism from academia are muffled by official policy or globalized commercial interests. Blaming the poor for their poverty is treated as a kind of tautology that releases the “haves” of the world from real responsibility.

Let's imagine for a moment what a museum of poverty would look like—the haggard faces and primitive houses enclosed behind glass, the glossy pamphlets that inform concisely, the numbers shocking with their size then fading from memory. In some ways, the museum wouldn't be too far from the perspective in many wealthy countries, that poverty is something that happens to other people

in other places where even practitioners who live with it intimately are free to leave and most have the means to do so.

The “less fortunate” will never cease to exist. What then is the way forward for a development practitioner? There are still opportunities to make progress toward healthier lives, stronger communities and more equitable access. As Yunus pointed out, we have the technology and the resources, it's a matter of will. This doesn't necessarily require more money but it does require the acknowledgement that the poor know best and the insistence that nothing about them should be done without them. We need to ask questions of and involve those whose thorough personal knowledge of poverty stems from living it every day. We must make a commitment to real collaboration, a commitment to working from the bottom up toward a fairer and more prosperous global landscape.

Meleah Paull received her M.A. in May and is working for World Learning.

Chronic Violence and the Challenge to Grassroots Organizations

By Tani Adams

What happens to us when high levels of violence become normal? To our development as human beings, our relationships with others, our attitudes and actions as citizens and to the practice of democracy?

I began to ask myself these questions in 2005, while living in Guatemala. It had been almost 10 years since the Peace Accords had ended 30 years of internal armed conflict. However, despite all the efforts to rebuild society, a new kind of fear and uncertainty had entered our lives. Kidnappings, homicides and extortions flared again, but they no longer obeyed the relentless but clear logic of wartime. A young man in the organization that I directed was killed—for his cell phone. A friend was kidnapped and held at gunpoint for a day so that the robbers could empty his meager bank account and steal his car.

A drug dealer opened a bar next door to our house, using prostitutes and loud *ranchera* music to move drugs in the local tourist economy. The neighborhood committee that had for years taken such good care of our corner of town stopped functioning. Neighbors averted their eyes when passing on the street. Government officials said the problem was beyond their control. The press never mentioned it. Finally, after being followed at odd times of day, we saw no alternative to posting a “for sale” sign on our house to signal that we were backing off. Throughout all this, what struck me most, even about myself, was the paralysis and the silence.

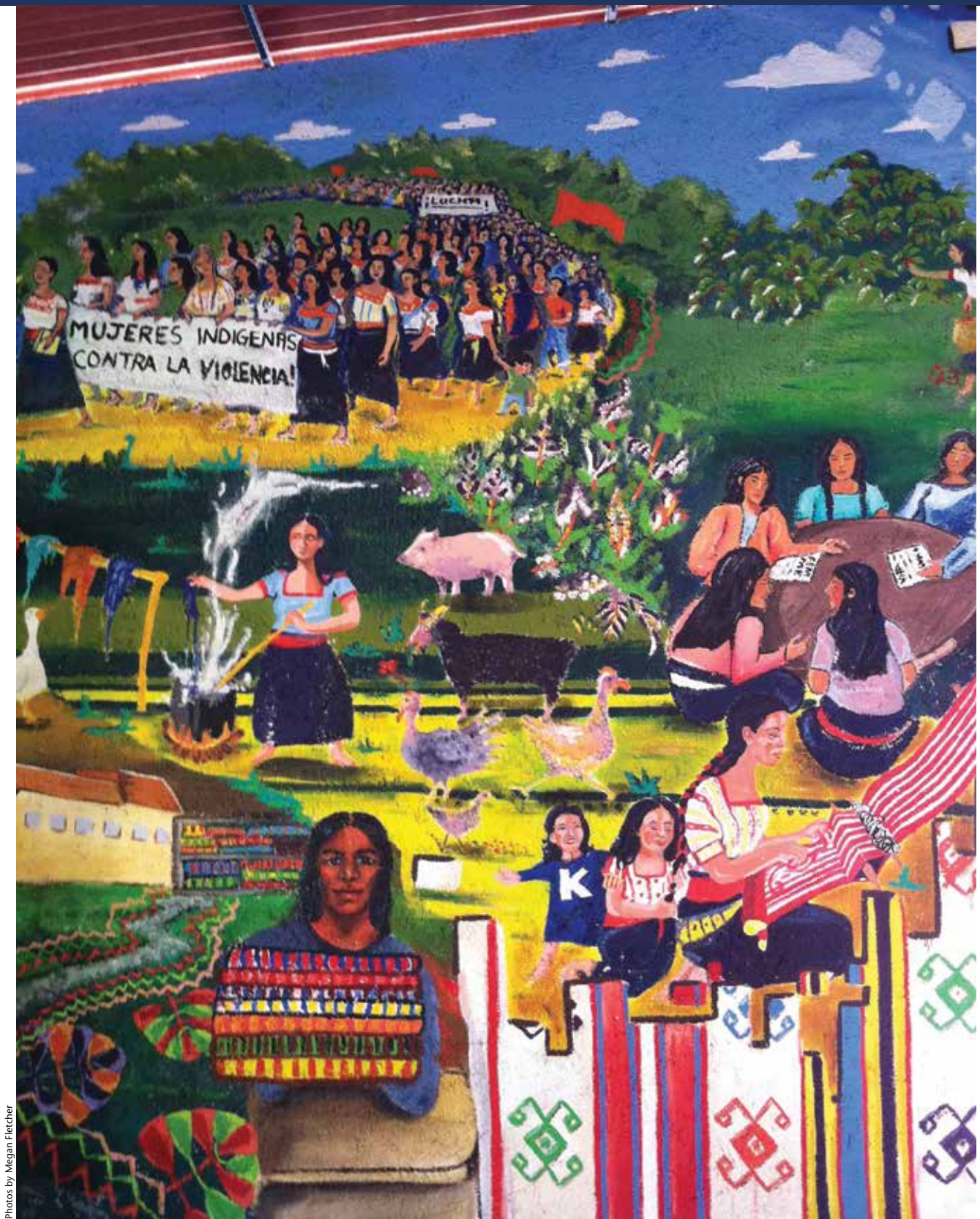
In 2011, when I decided to look more deeply, I discovered that our experience in Guatemala was consistent with a global phenomenon. According to a report issued by the World Bank in 2011, today “one in four people on the planet, more than 1.5 billion, live in fragile and conflict-affected states or

in countries with very high levels of criminal violence.” Through an extensive review of literature that included contributions from social psychology, neurological science, anthropology, political science, economics and environmental science, I built a framework that sets forth how chronic violence affects human, social and civic development. In this context, it turns out, social relations become more restricted and conflictive; our civic participation and sense of responsibility toward the community suffer as do the very prospects for democracy.

A colleague at the Inter-American Foundation invited me to speak to the staff, many of whom were increasingly concerned about the challenge of violence and unsure of how to respond. My description of the structural drivers and the perverse behavioral patterns that violence can provoke resonated with them. The IAF then asked me for a preliminary assessment of the impact of violence on its work, and we learned that violence affected almost 30 percent of the active portfolio. The IAF proposed that I coordinate a collective learning process involving staff and grantee partners in five countries to explore how to factor this reality into development. This article summarizes my findings and their implications and describes the IAF’s Chronic Violence Learning Project.

A new lens on a global challenge

The World Health Organization defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation” (2002). Threats can be as powerful as



Photos by Megan Fletcher

Detail of a mural in Guatemala depicting "indigenous women against violence."

physical acts, and violence directed at oneself is as important as forms directed externally. Suicides, for example, constitute 49 percent of all violent deaths worldwide; domestic abuse is pervasive, but often invisible. Poverty can be as destructive as physical aggression. “Material deprivation reduces people to mere survival; insecurity causes families to break up; exploitation robs people of their potential; humiliation, exclusion and contempt reach a point at which people living in extreme poverty are not recognized as human beings....” (International Movement, 2013).

Chronic violence, a term developed by J. V. Pearce in 2007, is violence that occurs and is measured “across three dimensions of intensity, space and time:

- where rates of violent death are at least twice the average for the country income category established by the World Bank;
- where these levels are sustained for five years or more; and
- where acts of violence not necessarily resulting in death are recorded at high levels across several socialization spaces, such as the household, the neighborhood, and the school, contributing to further reproduction of violence over time”

It occurs where people have few prospects for changing these conditions in the short or medium term. The long-term fragility or relative absence of the state is a significant contributing factor. Although chronic violence is most associated with urban and extra-urban slums, rural residents in today’s fluid and unstable economic and social environment are often just as vulnerable, as are migrant, refugee, internally displaced, stateless and other transient populations and systematically marginalized groups. While the legacy of conflict, inequality and repression is important, today’s violence is colored by rapidly evolving information technologies, climate change, intensified processes of globalization and other contemporary dynamics.

The Chronic Violence Framework

The Chronic Violence Framework points to a self-perpetuating system driven by both macro-level processes as well as by individual, social and civic behaviors, values and cultures. The framework has six propositions.

- *Chronic violence is generated by multiple macro-level processes.* These include extreme poverty and growing perceptions of social inequality; historical legacies of conflict; migration and displacement; the persistent weaknesses of many new democracies and the failure of security-oriented political reforms; organized crime and illicit trade; the socially destructive impact of classic urbanization policies and certain kinds of economic development.
- *Chronic violence undermines healthy human development.* Vulnerability to chronic violence weakens the maternal-infant bond, undermining children’s primary development. Empathy can become obstructed by the neurological effects of constant stress. Gender and family relations can become polarized and weakened, and domestic abuse intensified. Childhood trauma can contribute to lasting measurable physical and mental health problems and destructive behaviors.
- *Exposure to chronic violence undermines constructive social relations.* Relentless fear and uncertainty leads to the short-term decision-making necessary for survival, preempting more nuanced strategic thinking. People tend to isolate themselves, resorting to “social silence” and seeking protection in cliques that view outsiders as dangerous “others.” Scapegoating and xenophobic attitudes can cause people to project blame for violent acts onto others and fuel vigilante justice. With few alternatives to transcend these conditions, vulnerable groups perceive themselves as having no value—as being “invisible” or “social zeroes.” Without prospects for steady work that lets them transition into adulthood and form families, young men suffer what one anthropologist termed “social death,” fueling shame, humiliation and rage often associated with a search for respect. Young women can establish their adulthood by bearing children, but this generates its own destructive consequences.
- *Chronic violence endangers the ability to assume civic responsibilities in a community or a nation and weakens support for democracy.* The search for safety behind walls, barriers, security gates and guards increasingly separates and alienates upper-, middle- and lower-income people from each other. Criminals assume para-state power, filling the vacuum left

- by weak or absent authorities. Public support for violence and illicit activity grows, as do suspicion of due process and human rights and distrust of government. Less studied is the tendency of vulnerable citizens to perceive themselves as passive victims.
- *Chronic violence is a systemic process that affects every aspect of human development and is reproduced via the interaction of macro-level processes and individual, social and civic behaviors, practices, and attitudes described above. Licit and illicit values, practices and institutions overlap and become confused, creating a “grey zone” in which the distinction between moral and immoral, right and wrong, legal and illegal become*

blurred. Chronic and repeated exposure to violence can lead to chronic traumatization and further destructive behaviors.

- *Chronic violence constitutes a new perverse normality that must be addressed in ways that contemplate its systematic, self-perpetuating and lasting nature. Because they are multi-faceted and persistent, the social and political trends associated with chronic violence become naturalized.*

The Chronic Violence Framework enables us to perceive the interlinked nature of a challenge currently seen as a collection of disparate problems labeled



Item on exhibit at Instituto Internacional de Aprendizaje para la Reconciliación Social, Guatemala City.

domestic, youth, gang, school, criminal or political, each with its own solution. Is the problem the violence caused by the young men who joined the gang? Is it the parents who abused or neglected them as children? The school system that didn't serve them well? The media that portray gang members as monsters? The local economy that offered no alternative to pushing drugs? Or the culture that values men who show their power by displaying guns, money, expensive cars and brutality toward women? This framework shifts our perspective to a notion of violence as a systemic phenomenon with multiple causes and effects.

Instead of focusing on specific kinds of violence in certain populations, the primary focus becomes the integral experience of violence from the perspectives of those who live it.

Thematically and institutionally isolated—siloe—approaches give way to more holistic approaches that are intersectorial, interdisciplinary, intergenerational and relational. All these related aspects of a challenge need to be understood no matter where one begins to act. Finally, this framework shifts the major long-term objective of traditional programs attempting to reduce or eliminate specific kinds of quantifiable violence toward the goal of “enabling” groups vulnerable to multiple forms of violence to “thrive.” The Chronic Violence Framework challenges us to develop system-based approaches, to support research and create platforms that let us “learn to see the elephant from every side.”

What is the IAF doing?

Community-based action takes on particular importance in contexts of chronic violence, which tends to undermine constructive and inclusive social action. The framework shows how critical the dynamic is to the IAF's efforts to help communities build agency, and our initial assessment showed how extensively the IAF—its partners, projects and staff—are affected by violence. How are grantee partners responding to chronic violence? What happens to the communities the IAF supports when they live with chronic violence? What responses may they already have developed? What others could emerge? How can the IAF support and encourage them? How does addressing this issue ensure that IAF-funded organizations have a larger impact?

The IAF's *Chronic Violence Learning Project*, launched in late 2012 to probe these questions, began as a year-long process of reflection that engaged grantee partners affected by violence in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico:

- Corporación Taller Prodesal, which works with displaced Colombians who have organized in the community of Galilea;
- Asociación Afroecuatoriana de Mujeres Progresistas, a grassroots organization of 200 Afro-Ecuadoran women who have joined forces to improve livelihoods in a marginal urban settlement in Guayaquil;
- Fundación para el Desarrollo Juvenil (FDJ), serving at-risk youths, including former gang members in San Salvador;
- Sa Qa Chol Nimla k'aleb'aal (SANK) comprising indigenous K'ek'ch'i Guatemalans who have organized around communal land rights in Chisec; and,
- K'in al Ansetik, a weaving cooperative for indigenous Mexican women in Chiapas.

Collaborators included Marcy Kelley and Juanita Roca of the IAF and Philip Thomas, who has many years of experience designing and leading collective processes of learning and reflection. Together we came up with a step-by-step methodology for exploring what chronic violence is and what it means for participants and their communities. An initial test in Guatemala enabled us to fine tune the approach. Then, during June and July of 2013, Juanita Roca and Marcy Kelley, along with their colleagues Seth Jesse, Gabriela Boyer, José Toasa, Amanda Fagerblom and Megan Fletcher, facilitated three-day workshops to confirm the utility of the concept. We also tried to grasp the vulnerability and resilience of their communities.

The learning process started with a discussion of personal experiences with violence, an experience in itself novel for many. Participants deconstructed their stories based on culture, relationships, feelings and external influences. This exercise helped them perceive how violence affects every aspect of their lives and demonstrated the consistent patterns in responses. “Even if we could fix [one kind of violence], it still doesn't take violence away,” said one participant. Through images from magazines,

and, in one instance, pictures of the local community, participants were introduced to the six propositions of the framework. Some resonated powerfully. Participants quickly understood the need to approach domestic, youth, drug and political violence as different facets of a single system. The old slogan that “violence begets violence” assumed fresh meaning. As one participant said, “When one is immersed in violence, it is contagious, it becomes an everyday occurrence and isn’t limited to a specific type.” Another expressed frustration. “I’ve been a victim of violence, first from my father, then from my first husband. I participated in domestic violence workshops that kept talking about how we are victims but didn’t analyze that violence is of many types and it affects us all.”

Adult participants, deeply aware of the challenges facing their children and grandchildren, were moved by the tragic consequences when young men cannot find legitimate work and opportunities. The idea that violence can be transmitted intergenerationally through trauma was particularly strong. Protecting children from violence was the arena that participants felt that they could most influence, but the powerful reality of domestic abuse was difficult for many to acknowledge and discuss openly. This paradox speaks to a phenomenon that Primo Levi called the “grey zone,” based on his observations of how prisoners coped with fear and brutality in Auschwitz, where the differences between wrong and right, moral and immoral, licit and illicit, victim and perpetrator, become blurred.

While it is very easy for most of us to describe how we are “victimized” by violence, it is much more difficult to recognize how we may perpetrate it. A participant observed, “We are tired, abandoned and fed up with not getting support from the institutions [that should protect us], so we burn tires, we close roads. Palm producers kill wildlife, burn all the animals and steal our land. What is right, should we keep waiting?” It was also hard to reflect on the tendency for people who live in constant fear to blame others. Some participants who identified as of indigenous or African descent had difficulty recognizing their own xenophobia or scapegoating.

As part of the group process, participants volunteered to be Martians and look at the situations

they described from an outsider’s point of view. “I’d be scared to walk into this community,” many said. The concept became key for the rest of the workshop. Participants mapped on a timeline events in the history of their respective organization or community, to understand the effect and evolution of violence as well as to identify strategies used to transcend difficulties. “We’ve learned to see not only the negative but also the positive,” one said. Many commented that this workshop represented their first opportunity to reflect on an issue that has become part of everyday life. “Those things that happen are now not only about each of us alone but affect us all.”

At the end of the year-long exercise, the IAF brought together representatives from each organization to think about next steps. Over three days, a consensus emerged to move forward and

- continue to fine tune the Chronic Violence Framework and develop a range of tools to enable interested groups to work with it;
- refine the methodology for collective learning and explore means to equip others to use it;
- identify collaborators in each country with similar interest in the challenges of violence and in community-based responses, as the first step toward creating a network of allies;
- develop a methodology for the original organizations to use in recording case studies that explore how chronic violence affects the community and organization, and mechanisms to address it; and
- build support for the vulnerable, including for themselves.

“The Inter-American Foundation hopes to enable both itself and its partners to deepen understanding,” concluded Juanita Roca, IAF representative for Colombia. “As we advance with this learning process, we may be able to replicate it in other countries, incorporate the lens into our grantmaking and discover with our partners ways to mobilize social capital toward successfully addressing the challenges that communities face.”

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Goodbye, Brazil: Émigrés from the Land of Soccer and Samba

By Maxine L. Margolis

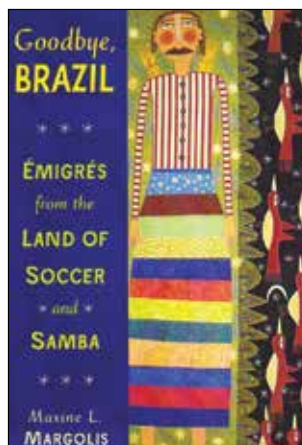
Minneapolis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013

This year Brazil will hold its eighth presidential election since its return to democracy in 1985. Much has changed over three decades. Brazil is hailed as a rising regional power and an apparently prosperous one. So it's easy to lose sight of the multiple economic crises that characterized the transition from dictatorship to democracy and easier still to miss a less-well known phenomenon launched during those years. Financial pressure made Brazilians look for opportunities abroad, reversing a migratory trend in a country formerly on the receiving end. Migration to Brazil, particularly from surrounding countries, continues today, but far more people leave the country than enter.

Maxine L. Margolis is an American anthropologist who has researched Brazilian culture and emigration since the 1980s. Since her first book, *Little Brazil: An Ethnography of Brazilian Immigrants in New York City*, appeared in 1994, she has extended her investigation into other U.S. cities as well as Europe and Japan. This most recent work explores the migration pattern more broadly—the reasons, the diaspora and the links to home. Less than 2 percent of Brazil's 200 million citizens live abroad and their remittances amount to “a drop in the bucket,” Margolis says, given the size of the Brazilian economy. Nonetheless, she insists, this diaspora has had a notable impact.

Why has migration occurred? Who are the émigrés? Why do they choose their destinations? How do they fare? The first Brazilians to leave were predominately middle-class males from Minas Gerais, specifically the city of Governador Valadares. They saw the move as an opportunity, not a necessity. Gradually this profile changed to include blue-collar workers, including women, who took more expensive and more dangerous routes to destinations that reflected their class, finances, education, community of origin, even ancestry—a basis for a legitimate claim to citizenship in Japan and Italy that did not and does not neutralize discrimination.

Diaspora enclaves often replicate the social hierarchy that migrants thought they had left behind. A



commonality that many share is what Margolis calls a “fall from grace” as they accept jobs that that pay decently but would rank as low-status in Brazil: childcare, construction, prostitution. Margolis notes that especially in the United States, Brazilian identity hinges on distinguishing the “otherness” of

Hispanics/Latino and emphasizing uniqueness, which does not make for cohesion. “[T]heir common ethnicity does not bind them in organized cooperative associations,” Margolis writes. “[O]bservers of Brazilian communities have remarked upon their apparent disunity and lack of ethnic-based organizations.” Many Brazilians see themselves as “sojourners,” not settlers, and hold onto a desire to return home. But will they? Margolis leaves us with that question.

Margolis' global perspective incorporates data collected from her own extensive ethnographic work and synthesizes other studies as well as media reports. Given the illegal nature of some migration flows, citing an accurate figure on Brazilian emigrants is difficult; Margolis uses figures from the American Community Survey undertaken by the U.S. Census Bureau and from the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She also digs into the tension between migration and development. In Brazil, remittances improve conditions for families and are not invested in community development and children left behind “see no reason to work hard in school or pursue a career” because they too expect to leave. Migration has given rise to a complex of travel agents, smugglers and recruiters in service to the business of sending Brazilians abroad on an industrial scale. However, some push factors are missing from the discussion, which could have benefited from a more robust analysis of the role of race relations, class structure and the education gap. Nonetheless Margolis' book is a splendid introduction to migration from this fascinating country.—Alejandra Argueta, former IAF program staff assistant



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